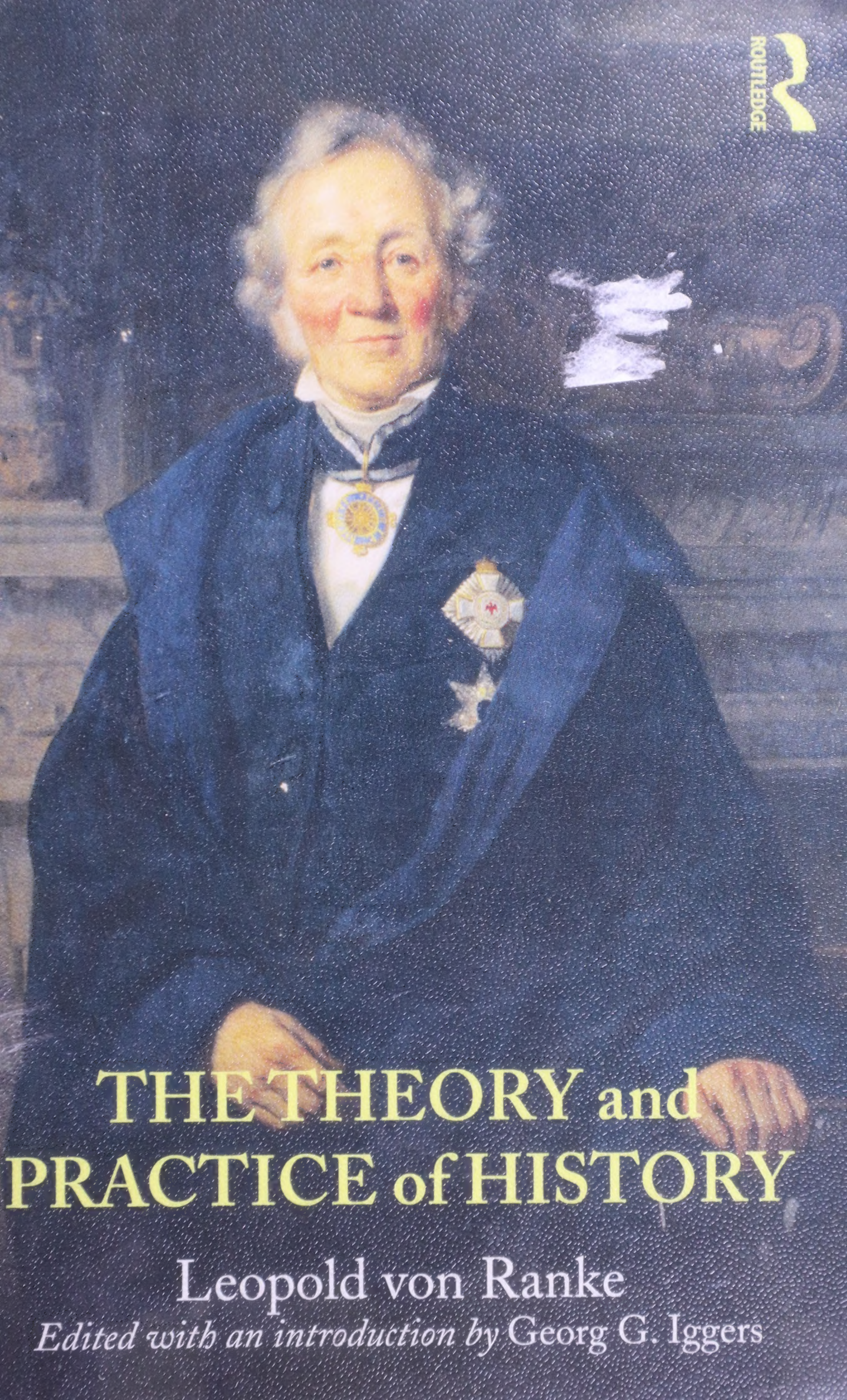


A full-length portrait of Leopold von Ranke, an elderly man with white hair, wearing a dark blue coat over a white shirt and a blue cravat. He is adorned with several medals and orders, including a large gold cross on his chest. The background is a dark, textured wall.

THE THEORY and PRACTICE of HISTORY

Leopold von Ranke

Edited with an introduction by Georg G. Iggers

The Theory and Practice of History

Leopold von Ranke, who was born in 1795, is considered to be one of the founders of the modern practice of writing history. This collection of his writings, edited and introduced by Georg G. Iggers, was first published in 1973 and remains the leading collection of Ranke's writings in the English language.

Now updated with the needs of current students in mind, this edition includes previously untranslated materials by the young Ranke, focusing particularly on the relationship between history and religion together with his inaugural lecture of 1819, 'On the Relation and Difference between History and Politics'. Including pieces on historical science, and on the relationship between history and philosophy, as well as country-specific histories, this book is essential reading for students of historiography.

Georg G. Iggers is Distinguished Professor of History Emeritus at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He has published numerous influential works on historiography including his co-authored *Global History of Historiography* (2008) and *Twentieth Century Historiography* (2005). He has received many fellowships including the Guggenheim, the Rockefeller, the Newberry Library and the National Endowment for the Humanities. He was also formerly a Fulbright fellow and a Woodrow Wilson Center fellow and recipient of Alexander von Humboldt Research Prize. From 1995 to 2000 he was president of the International Commission for the History and Theory of Historiography.

The Theory and Practice of History

Leopold von Ranke

Edited with an introduction by
Georg G. Iggers

New translations by Wilma A. Iggers

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Preface

An earlier version of this volume was first published in 1973 as part of a projected European Historiography Series initiated by Prof. F. J. Levy. The series unfortunately was not continued past this volume when Bobbs-Merrill soon afterwards went out of business. The aim of the volume was to present a side of Ranke that had been largely neglected: the theoretical assumptions which underlay his great narrative histories. In fact Ranke reflected throughout his life on these assumptions, not in any works dedicated to theory, but in the prefaces to his histories, which were published, and in the introductions to his courses at the University of Berlin, which for the most part were not published. These theoretical formulations are important for understanding Ranke's narratives, his selection of topics and of individuals, and his search for the tendencies he saw operating in history.

The 1973 version was co-edited by me and the late Konrad von Moltke. I took main responsibility for Ranke's theoretical statements and wrote the Introduction; Von Moltke revised and abridged the 1901 translation by E. Fowler of the *History of the Popes*. He and I consulted each other regularly. My wife, Wilma A. Iggers, translated Ranke's theoretical statements, which had not been translated previously. Because of limitations of space I chose only two chapters for this new edition from the Fowler translation which reflect particularly well Ranke's approach to writing history. The complete Fowler translation reprinted in 1966 is readily available. I have kept all the selections from the 1973 edition that reflect Ranke's theoretical views and added his inaugural address of 1836 on the relation of history and politics when he became a full professor at the University of Berlin. I also included an important early letter to his brother Heinrich from 1820 in which he describes the historical interests and the religious faith that define his scholarly work throughout his life.

I have thoroughly revised the introduction of 1973 taking into account the changing interpretations of Ranke in the past 40 years. The bibliographical essay has been brought up to the present.

In addition to the people to whom I expressed my thanks in the Preface of 1973, I would like to thank particularly Ernst Schulin and Stefan Jordan who carefully read the 1973 Introduction before I began to revise it and then read the updated present Introduction and made valuable comments. Jörn Rüsen with whom I

discussed this project offered useful suggestions. Daniel Plassche, a graduate student in history with a degree in library science, offered valuable assistance with computer and bibliographical problems and also read the text and made important suggestions for corrections. I wish to thank Adam Budd who recommended the reader to Routledge. I also want to express my gratitude to Konrad von Moltke's heirs who permitted me to publish this edition without asking for any financial compensation. I also want to thank Lothar Gall, the editor of the *Historische Zeitschrift*, for allowing us to use selections freely from the journal. And finally I want to thank Wilma who carefully followed my work and also translated Ranke's letter of 1820 for this edition.

Georg G. Iggers
Buffalo, NY

Introduction

Probably no historian in the nineteenth century has had an influence on the development of historical scholarship equal to that of Leopold von Ranke. He has been called the “father of historical science”.¹ And indeed Ranke’s critical use of documents became the model for historical research and writing in the nineteenth century, first in Germany and then generally throughout the world, as history increasingly became a professional, university-centered discipline. Ranke was extensively and repeatedly translated into English. Five separate translations of the *History of the Popes* appeared before 1900. The newly formed American Historical Association in 1885 elected Ranke, whom George Bancroft at this occasion called “the greatest living historian”, as its first honorary member. Nevertheless since the First World War, Ranke has been largely ignored outside of Germany. This lack of interest is related to the identification of Ranke with modes of historical writing that appeared outdated by then.

Despite the reverence in which the new historical profession held Ranke, he was little understood in America or in Great Britain.² Indeed the reverence rested in part on misunderstanding. He was viewed as the prototype of the technically trained historian and as a great representative of the positivistic scientific tradition of the nineteenth century, a contemporary of Lyell, Wallace, Darwin, and Renan, who “turned the lecture room into a laboratory, using documents instead of ‘bushels of clams’”.³ The core of Ranke’s method was seen to lie in his determination “to hold

1 Herbert B. Adams, “New Methods of Study in History,” *Johns Hopkins University Studies in History and Political Science*, vol. II, 1884, 65.

2 On the interpretations of Ranke in America, see Georg G. Iggers, “The Image of Ranke in American and German Historical Thought,” *History and Theory*, vol. II 1962, 17–40. See also Dorothy Ross, “On the Misunderstanding of Ranke and the Origins of the Historical Profession in America,” in Georg G. Iggers and James M. Powell, eds., *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline*, Syracuse, 1990, pp. 154–69. She stresses that not all American historians saw Ranke in such positivistic terms; she cites John Burgess who praised Ranke for having a “far-reaching, all-embracing philosophic outlook,” *ibid.*, p. 162.

3 Walter P. Webb, “The Historical Seminar: Its Outer Shell and Its Inner Spirit,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. XLII, 1955–56, 11.

strictly to the facts of history",⁴ "his formulation of the principles of internal criticism and his insistence upon entire objectivity in the treatment of the past",⁵ his avoidance of questions of theory, which he rightly left to the poets, philosophers, and theologians,⁶ and his stress on technical training at the cost of literary brilliance.⁷ Ranke let the facts speak for themselves; and since history for him was past politics, these facts were contained primarily in the documents of state.

But such an approach appeared increasingly irrelevant to historians who operated in a period of rapid industrialization and democratization with a concept of science more in line with the revision of scientific thought in the twentieth century. By the turn of the century, important historians such as Frederick Turner, James Harvey Robinson and Charles Beard in the United States, Henri Berr in France, and Karl Lamprecht in Germany, rejected the classical academic history which they identified with Ranke and sought to go beyond a fact-oriented political history to the analysis of underlying social and economic forces. "History is all the remains that have come down to us", not just documents, Turner wrote in criticism of Ranke.⁸ F. J. Teggart agreed at the time with Lamprecht that Ranke represented an earlier stage in the development of science that was concerned with the accumulation of facts rather than with induction and which, "by intellectual predilection no less than in point of date, antecedes the period of Darwinian biology".⁹

The result was a profound indifference to Ranke in the English-speaking countries which in the nineteenth century had taken him so seriously. From 1910 until the 1960s no new edition of any of his major works appeared in English.¹⁰ Only in Germany was Ranke still taken seriously and this for two very different reasons. The political and social climate remained more congenial to his historiography, as it was then understood to be, at least until the catastrophe of National Socialism and the reexamination of historiographical traditions after 1945. The incomplete democratization of the country favored a historiography that stressed the actions of statesmen to the neglect of the history of the masses.

4 Herbert B. Adams, "Leopold von Ranke", *Johns Hopkins Studies*, vol. III, 1888, 104-5: "Ranke, on the other hand, determined to hold strictly to the facts of history, to preach no sermon, to point no moral, to adorn no tale, but to tell the simple historic truth. His sole ambition was to narrate things as they really were, wie es eigentlich gewesen."

5 H. E. Barnes, "History: Its Rise and Development", in *Encyclopedia Americana*, New York, 1932, vol. XIV, 245.

6 George B. Adams, "History and the Philosophy of History", *American Historical Review*, vol. XIV, 1908-9, 223.

7 Ephraim Emerton, "The Practice Method in Higher Historical Instruction", in *Methods of Teaching History*, Boston, 1885, 42.

8 Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of History", in *The Early Writings of Frederick Jackson Turner*, ed. Everett Edwards, Madison, 1938, p.54; for Turner on Ranke, see p.51.

9 Frederick Teggart, "The Circumstances or the Substance of History", *American Historical Review*, vol. XV, 1909-10, 709.

10 Recent years have seen reprint editions in the United States of several nineteenth and early twentieth century editions of Ranke's works. See bibliography.

Moreover, Ranke's methodology and his idealistic theoretical presuppositions fitted well into the tradition of historical and cultural sciences dominant in Germany. German scholars still in the early twentieth century attempted self-consciously to differentiate their methods, their conception of society and their political values from the supposedly positivistic, natural science-oriented approach of the social sciences in the Western countries, which they identified with the ideology of democracy. They viewed Ranke as one of the main contributors to a peculiarly German outlook in the cultural sciences suited to a uniquely German form of political and social conservatism. Friedrich Meinecke, as late as 1936, considered this tradition of thought, which he named "historism" (*Historismus*),¹¹ to be Germany's greatest contribution to historical thought since the Reformation and the "highest stage of understanding of things human attained by man".¹² German thought alone, he argued, had freed itself from the rigidity of a natural law outlook which supposedly still dominated Western social science thought and thus attained an understanding of the fullness and diversity of man's historical experience. The attempt by Lamprecht at the turn of the century to repudiate Ranke had little influence. Indeed, the twentieth century saw an increased interest in Germany in Ranke. Only after 1945 did a searching criticism of his historiographical ideas set in.

The purpose of the present volume is in part to correct the image of Ranke as a narrow and fact-oriented historian hostile to theory and to present elements of his writings that reflect important aspects of nineteenth century historical thought. Far from being hostile to theory, Ranke was guided more than most historians by conscious theoretical assumptions. Indeed, his main contribution to German historical science was not the critical method in the treatment of historical documents, which very much pre-dated Ranke's writings, but his formulation and translation into practice of a conception of history that affected the main currents

11 On the continuity of German historiographical and social science traditions, see Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History*, Middletown, Conn., 1968. We are hesitant to use the English term, "historicism" as a translation for "Historismus". The term "historicism" in English has acquired a large number of meanings which the term "Historismus" did not possess. The term "Historismus" refers primarily to the historical faith of the German classical tradition of historiography. The term "historicism" came into English in the 1930s apparently as a translation of Croce's term "storicismo". Since then it has acquired connotations of radical historical relativism. Karl Popper in *The Poverty of Historicism*, New York, 1957, used it to denote a form of historical determinism. We would have preferred to use the term "historism", now out of use, which was current in English until the 1900s and which more closely translated the German term "Historismus". For a discussion of the meaning of the term "historicism", see Dwight E. Lee and Robert N. Beck, "The Meaning of 'Historicism'", *American Historical Review*, vol. LIX 1953–54, 568–77; for the meaning of the terms "historism", "historicism" and "Historismus", see Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History*, Middletown, Conn., 1968, pp.287–90. Also Iggers, "Historicism" in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, vol. 2 New York, 1973, pp.456–64, and Iggers, "Historicism: The History and Meaning of the Term", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 56, 1995, 129–52.

12 Friedrich Meinecke, "Die Entstehung des Historismus", *Werke*, Stuttgart, 1957–79, vol. 3, p.4; English: *Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook*, New York, 1972.

of historical writing in Germany and to a lesser extent elsewhere well into the twentieth century. Ranke's emphasis on the application of the critical method must be understood within the framework of his idealistic notions of history. These notions, largely ignored in the United States where the early generation of professional historians created an image of an essentially positivistic Ranke, were very influential in Germany into the twentieth century. Indeed Ranke's oft quoted dictum, "*blos zeigen, wie es eigentlich gewesen*" has generally been misunderstood in the English-speaking world as asking the historian to be satisfied with a purely factual recreation of the past. Ranke's writings make it clear that he did not mean this. In fact the word "*eigentlich*" which is the key to the phrase just quoted, has been poorly translated into English as 'really' or 'actually'; 'essentially' would be a better rendition in this context. This gives the phrase an entirely different meaning, and one much more in keeping with Ranke's philosophical ideas. It is not factuality, but the emphasis on the essential that makes an account historical.

Ranke belonged to the tradition of nineteenth century German thinkers who stressed that the historical and cultural sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) dealing with values, intentions and volitions were fundamentally different from the natural sciences and required unique methods aiming at concrete understanding (*Verstehen*) of historical phenomena rather than abstract causal explanations. This tradition viewed history as the realm of spirit and ideas, not in the sense of Hegel's absolute ideas but as the concrete intentions and thoughts of concrete individuals and institutions existing in time. Every abstraction detracted from the living reality of history. And although the historian could not dispense with generalizations, they must be generalizations rooted in the historical subject matter. Again the originality of Ranke's thought should not be overstressed. Ranke did not originate the *Verstehen*¹³ approach, which was reflected in broad currents of German Idealistic thought in theology, philology, philosophy and jurisprudence and already foreshadowed in the eighteenth century in the writings of Giambattista Vico¹⁴ and Johann Gottfried Herder, and found its classical formulation later in the nineteenth and early in the twentieth century in the writings of the Neo-Kantian philosophers such as Wilhelm Dilthey.¹⁵

13 For a discussion of the *Verstehen* tradition in German *Geisteswissenschaften*, see Joachim Wach, *Das Verstehen* Tübingen, 1926–33, 3 vols., and Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, Tübingen, 1960; Rainer Greshoff, *et al*, eds., *Verstehen und Erklären. Sozial- und kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven*, München, 2008; Andreas Frings/Johannes Marx, eds., *Erzählen, Erklären, Verstehen. Beiträge zur Wissenschaftstheorie und Methodologie der Historischen Kulturwissenschaften*, Berlin, 2008.

14 Giambattista Vico, *La Scienza Nuova*, Napoli, 1725. English: *The First New Science*, Cambridge, 2002.

15 See Michael Ermath, *The Critique of Historical Reason*, Chicago, 1978; Thomas Willey, *Back to Kant. The Revival of Kantianism in German Social and Historical Thought*, Detroit, 1978.

Life¹⁶

Ranke cannot be understood apart from the intellectual and political climate of his time. Born in 1795, Leopold Ranke – the “von” was added in 1863 when he was raised to the nobility – reflects currents of early nineteenth century thought, the romantic interest in the past, the organic conception of society, the distrust of the French Enlightenment and of the political ideology of the Revolution, but he also retains an element of eighteenth century cosmopolitanism, which preserves him from the one-sided nationalism of many of his contemporaries. We may perhaps distinguish four major influences on Ranke’s intellectual formation: 1) the Lutheran religious background in which he grew up; 2) the classical humanistic education he received as a youth; 3) the German Idealistic philosophy, which dominated the intellectual atmosphere; and 4) the politics of the post-1815 Restoration.

Ranke was born in Thuringia, in the small town of Wiehe, at the time a part of the Electorate of Saxony. He was thus not a Prussian by birth. Wiehe and the region in which it lay, the “Goldene Aue (Golden Meadow)”, were annexed by Prussia only in 1815 at the Congress of Vienna. Ranke did not possess the deep emotional commitment to Prussia of later German historians. He was relatively little affected by the enthusiasm of the Prussian Wars of Liberation. The decisive political experience for him was not the French Revolution or the Napoleonic Wars but the post-1815 Restoration. His childhood in Saxony undoubtedly contributed to his conception of a federal Germany within a European framework of powers. Ranke maintained a deep sympathy for Austria and its role in a European order such as that attempted in 1815 in the Holy Alliance.

Since the early seventeenth century all the Rankes had been Lutheran ministers in Thuringia except for Ranke’s father, a lawyer, who regretted not having followed the profession of his ancestors. The Lutheran religiosity of the home was reinforced in the two Latin schools Ranke attended at nearby Donndorf and at the famous school of Schulpforta, maintained by the Saxon princes, which Lessing and Klopstock had attended. In 1814 Ranke went to the University of Leipzig with the intention of studying theology and philology. His first major scholarly work was an uncompleted study of Luther, known as the “Luther-Fragment”.¹⁷

16 For an early biography see Alfred Dove, “Leopold von Ranke”, *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 27, 1888, pp.241–69; for a more recent biographical sketch, see Ernst Schulin “Leopold von Ranke 1795–1886” in Heinz Duchhardt *et al*, eds., *Europa-Historiker. Ein biographisches Handbuch*, Göttingen, 2006, pp.129–51; see also Santi Di Bella, *Leopold von Ranke: Gli anni di formazione*, Cosenza, 2006; Ulrich Muhlack, “Leopold von Ranke”, in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 22, Berlin, 2003, pp.140–42, and Muhlack, “Einleitung” in *Gesamtausgabe des Briefwechsels von Leopold von Ranke*, Historisch-kritische ed., vol. 1, 1813–25, München, 2007. For a closer personal view, see the memories of Ranke’s daughter-in-law, Lily Selma von Ranke, *Persönliche Erinnerungen an Leopold von Ranke*, Peter von Blankenburg and Siegfried Baur, eds., Berlin, December 2008.

17 “Das Luther-Fragment von 1817”, Elisabeth Schweitzer, ed., in Leopold von Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation – Gesamtausgabe der Deutschen Akademie*, München, 1925–26, pp.311–99.

What dissuaded him from completing his theological studies was the rationalistic atmosphere which still permeated the theological faculties, a rationalism which he described later as “unsatisfactory, shallow and flat” in its attempt to “combine opposing principles, the unconditionally valid which has been proclaimed and recognized as the word of God and the reasoning of the moment”. “I believed unconditionally” he wrote.¹⁸ Convinced that “God dwells, lives, and is recognizable in all history”¹⁹ he nevertheless was free of a narrow fundamentalism that saw the intervention of God in natural processes. His religious belief has been repeatedly described as panentheism which, in contrast to pantheism, recognized the separateness of all human existence from God, yet sees the reflection of God in all existence. The historian’s task resembled that of the priest; he was to decipher the “holy hieroglyph” contained in history.²⁰

Studies of Ranke have generally stressed his Lutheran religiosity.²¹ It is questionable, however, whether his panentheism was really in harmony with Lutheran teaching. For Luther, as for Saint Paul, the “world into which God sent his Word was thoroughly debased and alienated”. There was basically no room for evil in Ranke’s world. History manifested the unfolding of moral energies, of ideas embodied in concrete individualities and institutions. This was an idea derived from German Idealistic thought, from Fichte, Schelling, and Goethe, whom Ranke read extensively in this period and which had little in common with the pessimism of Luther or Saint Paul.²²

Ranke had almost no formal training as a historian. At Donndorf and Schulpforta, he received a classical humanistic education. At Leipzig he studied classical philology. He attended a mandatory course in history at Leipzig but disdained the historical works he encountered, which he considered “a mass of undigested notes, indeed of facts not understood”.²³ Nevertheless he received at Leipzig the foundations of his training as a historian. The one German historical work that made a positive impression on him was Niebuhr’s *Roman History*. The

18 See his autobiographical “Dictat vom October 1863”, in Leopold von Ranke’s *Sämmtliche Werke* (subsequently cited as SW), vol. LIII/LIV, Leipzig, 1873–90, p.29.

19 Letter to Heinrich Ranke, Frankfurt a. O., Ende März 1820, in SW, LIII/LIV, p.89.

20 Ibid., p.90.

21 See, e.g., Carl Hinrichs, *Ranke and die Geschichtstheologie der Goethezeit*, Göttingen, 1954; also Theodore H. Von Laue, *Leopold Ranke: The Formative Years*, Princeton, 1950; Leonard Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History*, Chicago, 1977.

22 Hans Liebeschütz in “Ranke”, pamphlet of the Historical Association, London, 1954, p.5 points at Ranke’s inability to grasp the role of evil in Luther’s theology. This point has generally been overlooked in the German literature, which has stressed Ranke’s Lutheran religiosity. Ilse Mayer-Kulenkampff, in “Rankes Lutherverhältnis. Dargestellt von dem Lutherfragment von 1817”, *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. CLXXII 1951, 65–99, stressed the extent to which Ranke misinterpreted Luther from the standpoint of German Idealism.

23 “Dictat vom October 1863”, in SW, LIII/LIV, p.28. He was critical of the one historian whose lectures he attended in Leipzig, Ernst Karl Wieland, who adopted Schiller’s tenet that the purpose of universal history was the “genetic explanation” of the present world, which to Ranke seemed too one-sided. See Schulin, “Leopold von Ranke 1795–1886”, p.130.

other historian who deeply influenced him was Thucydides on whom he wrote his dissertation. More important, he was introduced by his teacher Gottfried Hermann to the critical methods of classical philology, which as we shall see were to play an important role in his development of a critical method for history.²⁴

Ranke's active interest in modern history dated from his days at the Gymnasium in Frankfurt on the Oder, a Prussian city east of Berlin, at which he taught classics and history. There he devoted himself first to ancient and medieval history, reading the ancient historians extensively in preparation for his teaching. Using the rich collection of medieval and early modern sources contained in the Gymnasium library, he began a critical study of these documents. He was struck by the contradictions and inconsistencies in the works of Francesco Guicciardini and Paolo Giovio. The result was a critical study of the histories of the period,²⁵ published as an appendix to Ranke's own synthesis of the period, *Histories of the Latin and Germanic Peoples (1494 to 1514)* (*Geschichten der römischen und germanischen Völker*) in 1824. Guicciardini, whose *Historia d'Italia* had served as the basis of most succeeding modern histories, according to Ranke had relied heavily on secondary sources and embellished and fabricated facts. Ranke promised in the preface to use "memoirs, diaries, letters, reports from embassies and original narratives of eye witnesses; other writings ... only when they seemed either to have been immediately derived from the former, or to equal them through some kind of original information". The "strict presentation of the facts, no matter how conditional and unattractive they might be," he asserted, "is undoubtedly the supreme law". But the presentation of the isolated event, he continued, was not the purpose of the historical work; it rather sought "the development of unity and the progress of events". The theme of the book was the emergence of the modern state system and the balance of power. It was to pave the way for a more comprehensive historical view of the great schism brought about by the Reformation. Ranke proceeded from the assumptions of the interrelatedness of the "Latin and Germanic Peoples" of Europe, to "show to what extent these nations have developed in unity and kindred movement". In practice, Ranke was unable to maintain the broad sweep of narrative. The story is interrupted repeatedly by a mass of details on diplomatic negotiations, political decisions and military

24 For a discussion of historical method before Ranke, see J. P. Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing* New York, 1942, particularly vol. II, 3–146; George P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1913, chap. I; Harry Elmer Barnes, *A History of Historical Writing*, New York, 1963, particularly pp.239–45; Andreas Kraus, *Vernunft und Geschichte*, Freiburg i.B., 1963; and Herbert Butterfield, *Man on His Past*, Boston, 1966, particularly chap. II. The methods Ranke applied to the study of documents of modern history were basically, of course, similar to those applied by the great classical philologists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Friedrich August Wolf, August Boeckh and Gottfried Hermann to the monuments of classical literature and by Barthold Georg Niebuhr to Roman antiquities.

25 *Nebst einer Kritik neuerer Geschichtsschreiber*, Berlin, 1824.

events, as his critic Heinrich Leo maintained.²⁶ Ranke himself admitted that the book contained only “histories, not history” (p.136). Later studies agreed. Theodore Von Laue, in the first significant study of Ranke in English, was justified when he observed, “the use of the plural in the title was indicative of the uncorrelated multitude of events and developments, mostly matters of war and foreign policy, in which the book abounded. It resembled a wild garden before the gardener brought order”.²⁷

The book nevertheless brought Ranke a call to the University of Berlin. The University of Berlin had been founded in 1809 largely upon the initiative of Wilhelm von Humboldt, then head of the section for education in the Prussian ministry of the interior, as a new type of institution of higher learning in which teaching would be closely related to research. This became the model of the nineteenth century German university. In 1825 Berlin was the most challenging of the German universities. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel held the chair of philosophy, Friedrich Daniel Schleiermacher taught theology, Friedrich Karl von Savigny and Karl Friedrich Eichhorn law. Two major orientations in the cultural sciences, represented by Hegelianism and the Historical School, were present there. Both believed that all cultural manifestations must be understood in terms of their historical genesis. But while Hegel saw history as a unitary, all-embracing process leading toward greater rationality, Savigny and Eichhorn, the founders of the Historical School of Jurisprudence, stressed the variety of expressions within history. In the late eighteenth century Herder had already argued that mankind fulfills itself not in a unilinear progressive development but in the flowering of unique national cultures, each fundamentally different and each developing its own genius in terms of its inherent principles of growth. Each culture was the expression of the will of God in a unique historical form. This position enjoins the study of all civilizations in terms of their own standards of value and refuses to apply any universally valid human norms in the assessment of a historical situation. In this spirit, for example, Savigny and Eichhorn opposed the codification of the law. Law, they maintained, grows organically with a culture; legal norms manifest themselves only in concrete historical contexts in the evolution of the spirit of a people. The task of the jurist is to understand the law as it developed historically and not to reduce it to abstract rational formulations. Ranke’s own position was akin to that of the Historical School.

The call to Berlin gave him an opportunity to play a central role in the training of historians. Most of the great German historians of the nineteenth century, among them Heinrich von Sybel, Wilhelm von Giesebrecht, Georg Waitz and the

26 See Siegfried Bauer, “Historiker-Streit mit Leo” in his *Versuch über die Historik des jungen Ranke*, Berlin, 1998, pp.112–23. This leads Baur, *ibid.*, pp.74–99, to conclude that Ranke’s first book was not really a historical work and that Ranke only afterwards overcame his difficulties in writing. From a different perspective, see Ernst Schulz, “Rankes erstes Buch”, in *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. 203, 1966, 581–609.

27 Von Laue, p.109.

Swiss Jacob Burckhardt, passed through Ranke's seminar in which he applied the critical method to historical writing. These students in turn trained a generation of scholars who dominated German university chairs of history well into the twentieth century. Ranke thus became in fact the father of modern historical science in Germany. Critical historical research, however, preceded him. Already in *De re diplomatica* (1681), the French historian Jean Mabillon had developed rules and criteria for judging sources and determining their authenticity.²⁸ There had developed in the eighteenth century at the University of Göttingen a school of historians, including Johann Christoph Gatterer, August Ludwig Schlözer and Arnold Hermann Heeren, who combined the critical method of erudite scholars like Mabillon with the concern of the philosophic historians of the eighteenth century, such as Voltaire and Gibbon, who sought to write universal history without a strict critical evaluation of their sources. Niebuhr and Ranke refined the concern with critical method; Ranke in the process narrowed the universality of the outlook of the Göttingen historians. What Ranke brought to history was less a new method – this had been developed to a great extent by the Göttingen school²⁹ – than a greater emphasis on the professional and technical character of history and a conception of history that we shall discuss later in this Introduction. His contemporaries, Friedrich Christoph Schlosser, Karl von Rotteck and Georg Gottfried Gervinus appeared to him as moralists and political publicists rather than as technical historians who wrote history on the basis of a critical examination of the sources.

The *Histories of the Latin and Germanic Peoples* had been based on a critical examination of published works. In Berlin Ranke discovered copies of Venetian diplomatic documents from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which he utilized in his second book, *Princes and Peoples of Southern Europe. The Ottomans and the Spanish Monarchy*. Published in 1827, the book was a broad survey of three centuries of history in which Ranke devoted considerably more space to the discussion of administration, trade and finance than in his earlier work. In the same year Ranke set out on a four-year journey to peruse source materials in the Austrian and Italian archives,³⁰ particularly the Venetian *Relazioni* (the reports of Venetian ambassadors sent from the various courts of Europe over

28 Long before Niebuhr, Louis de Beaufort in *Dissertation sur l'incertitude des cinq premiers siècles de l'histoire romaine*, 1738, revised 1750, had questioned the authenticity of Roman sources, especially Livy.

29 See Georg G. Iggers, "The European Context of Eighteenth-Century German Enlightenment", in Hans-Erich Bödecker *et al.*, eds., *Aufklärung und Geschichte. Studien zur deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen, 1986, pp.225–45; also Iggers, "Die Göttinger Historiker und die Geschichtswissenschaft des 18. Jahrhunderts", in Siegfried Bahne *et al.*, eds., *Mentalitäten und Lebensverhältnisse, Beispiele aus der Sozialgeschichte der Neuzeit*, Göttingen, 1982, pp.385–98.

30 Philipp Müller, "Doing Historical Research in the Early Nineteenth Century: Leopold Ranke, the Archive Policy and the *relazioni*", manuscript; Kasper Rijsberg Eskildsen, "Leopold Ranke's Archival Turn: Location and Evidence in Modern Historiography", in *Modern Intellectual History*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2008, 425–53.

three centuries),³¹ which threw light not only on Venetian diplomatic relations but also on the internal political history of the various European states. From the fall of 1827 to the fall of 1828, he worked in Vienna where he developed a friendship with Friedrich Gentz, the Catholic conservative political theorist, publicist and adviser to Prince Metternich, who arranged for him to receive permission to use the Venetian papers in the Vienna archives. A by-product of his stay in Vienna was the *History of Serbia and the Servian Revolution*,³² written in part with material made available to him by Serbian patriots with whom he came in close contact. In October 1828 he arrived in Italy where he became the first historian to work thoroughly through the *Relazioni* in Venice; he also used archives in Rome and Florence. The Vatican archives remained closed to him, but he was able to use important private archives in Rome. The Viennese and Italian researches provided the basis for his *History of the Popes*, which appeared between 1834 and 1836.

Upon his return to Berlin in 1831, Ranke became for the first and only time closely involved in politics. This involvement would be of little interest to us except that it resulted in a crystallization of Ranke's political views and his conception of society and history that was reflected in his historical writings. In his student days, Ranke had been aloof from the *Burschenschaften*, the nationalistic student fraternity. In his autobiography he describes his interest but lack of involvement with which he followed the visit of *Turnvater* Karl August Jahn, the founder of the ultra-nationalistic sports association, to Frankfurt on the Oder. After Ranke's arrival in Berlin in 1825, the highly conservative First Director of the Section for Public Instruction, Heinrich von Kamptz, was his sponsor. However, his closest friends were the liberal Varnhagen von Ense and his brilliant wife Rahel, whose salon was a gathering place for liberal intellectuals. He was on good terms with the liberal Alexander von Humboldt, with Friedrich Carl von Savigny, and with Friedrich Schleiermacher. The intermediate political position of the latter two resembled that occupied by Ranke in the 1830s. His sympathies for the existing European order had made possible congenial conversations during his weekly evening visits with Friedrich Gentz in Vienna during his stay there in 1827 and 1828.

The 1830 Revolution seems to have deeply disturbed him. He believed the European order to be threatened by a renewal of revolutionary activity. On his return to Berlin in 1831 he agreed to edit a political journal, the *Historisch-Politische Zeitschrift*, sponsored by the Prussian government, an undertaking that was to alienate him from his liberal friends, the Varnhagen von Enses and Alexander von Humboldt. He did not consider his position with the journal to be a reactionary one. In his autobiography, he wrote:

31 See Gino Benzoni, "Ranke's Favorite Source", in Georg G. Iggers and James M. Powell, eds., *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline*, pp.45-57.

32 Leopold von Ranke, *Die Serbische Revolution. Aus serbischen Papieren und Mittheilungen*, Hamburg, 1829. English: *A History of Serbia and the Servian Revolution*, trans. Louisa Kerr, New York, 1973.

“The direction I decided to follow was neither revolutionary nor reactionary. I was so bold as to undertake to defend a third direction midway between the two points of view that confronted each other in every public and private discussion. This new orientation, which adhered to a status quo which rests on the past, aimed at opening up a future in which one would be able to do justice to new ideas, as long as they contained truth.”³³

In effect the journal was founded to counter the *Berliner Politisches Wochenblatt*, established in late 1831 by the highly conservative Friedrich von Raumer and Ranke’s acquaintances Joseph von Radowitz and the brothers Ernst Ludwig and Leopold von Gerlach to propagate the feudal, corporative doctrines of the late Karl Ludwig von Haller. To be sure, like Hegel, Ranke was not an admirer of the old regime, which provided social and political functions to a privileged Junker aristocracy, but instead he supported the bureaucratic, centralized Prussian monarchy as reformed in the period after 1806. The Prussian state, for Ranke as for Hegel, stood for progress, but progress based organically on the foundations of the past.

In practice, Ranke’s articles contained much more criticism of the liberals than of the Right. He argued against the transferability of foreign political ideas and institutions, specifically those of the French Revolution, to Germany. The French Revolution, he warned, had shown the ill-effects of grafting foreign, British, and especially North American political ideas onto traditional institutions. The danger of the French Revolution rested less in the military extension of France than in the threat presented by its ideas. Every state, Ranke held, is unique and must develop according to its own inner principles. Radical change marks a break with organic development. Ranke opposed a constitution for Prussia and argued against a Prussian parliament representing the estates (*Ständeversammlung*), which moderate liberals like the Baron vom Stein and Wilhelm von Humboldt had advocated. Ranke nowhere acknowledged the rights of the individual against the state, which Humboldt and Haller had defended from opposing political positions. Ranke’s position was essentially conservative; he defended neither the reactionary conception of traditional “liberties” (*Libertäten*) nor the liberal one of the rights of the individual. The journal turned out to be a failure and was suspended in 1836. Nevertheless, it was to contain several of Ranke’s most important theoretical statements, including the two essays “The Great Powers” and “A Dialogue on Politics”, which we have reprinted in this collection.

The remainder of Ranke’s life was uneventful, closely related to his work. In late 1833 he had been elevated to a full professorship (*Ordinariat*) at the University of Berlin where he remained for the rest of his life, missing only four semesters in four decades on study tours to archives, mostly to France and Great Britain. Ranke only once seriously considered an offer to move from Berlin, when in 1853 his admirer and former student King Maximilian II of Bavaria urged him to accept a call to the University of Munich.

33 Autobiographical “Dictat vom November 1885”, in *SW*, LIII/LIV, 48.

In Berlin Ranke led a relatively solitary life. He followed a rigid daily schedule of work, interrupted by a walk in the Tiergarten, his favorite spot for repose and reflection. In his bachelor days in the 1830s and early 1840s, he was a welcome guest in Berlin's cultured social circles, although no longer in the circle of liberal intellectuals he had frequented before his trip to Italy. Ranke was on the whole isolated from his colleagues at the university. He was on good terms with Savigny and Eichhorn and had formed a close friendship with the philosopher Heinrich Ritter. Ritter, however, left Berlin in 1833. Among historians a lifelong correspondence connected him with Gustav Adolf Harald Stenzel, who had been a fellow student in Leipzig. It was Stenzel who at Leipzig had first introduced Ranke to the critical study of medieval documents. The person closest to him, however, was his younger brother Heinrich, who had joined him at the Gymnasium in Frankfurt on the Oder and with whom more than with his other brothers he was able to exchange ideas. In later years he developed a certain affinity with his brother Ferdinand. Shortly before his 49th birthday, he married Clarissa Graves, 12 years his junior, the daughter of a Protestant barrister from Ireland. The marriage was hardly a romantic one. Nevertheless, it seems to have been a good marriage and judging by the letters Ranke has left, a warm, human although probably not intellectually stimulating relationship.³⁴

The year 1871 turned out to be a particularly tragic point in Ranke's life with the death of his wife. Ranke retired from his lectures under not entirely happy circumstances: and his eyesight rapidly faded. The remaining 15 years of Ranke's life were nevertheless years of intense activity. With the help of readers and secretaries he continued his research and writing and in the final years of his life turned to his lifelong hope of writing a universal history.

Ranke's existence consisted mostly of research, writing and teaching. Various students, both friendly and hostile, have left accounts of his lectures. They generally agree that he was an ineffective lecturer. "That was no lecture, but a mumbled, whispered, groaned monologue, delivered with arbitrary interruptions, of which we understood only individual words. Only the mimicry of the old gentleman was interesting," wrote an annoyed auditor about his visit to a Ranke lecture in 1857.³⁵ Even his disciple and admirer Wilhelm von Giesebrecht paints a not very dissimilar picture of a lecture course in 1837. Actually Ranke appears to have put great care into the preparation of his lectures. Extensive lecture notes still exist.³⁶ These notes

34 On Clarissa Graves Ranke see Andreas Boldt, *The Role of Ireland in the Life of Leopold von Ranke 1795–1886: The Historian and Historical Truth*, Lewiston, NY, 2007.

35 Gunter Berg, *Leopold von Ranke als akademischer Lehrer. Studien zu seinen Vorlesungen und seinem Geschichtsdenken*, Göttingen, 1968, p.60. For a description of Ranke's lectures by his students, see also George P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century*, Boston, 1959, pp.106–7. On Ranke's tenure at the University of Berlin, see also Max Lenz, *Geschichte der Königlichen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin*, Halle, 1910–18, II, i, pp.264–81, 503–5; II, ii, pp.152–3.

36 A major collection of his lecture notes is deposited at Syracuse University, which bought Ranke's library after his death.

he would regularly revise. He spoke freely, however, following notes loosely rather than reading a prepared manuscript. Ranke conscientiously gave his lectures and declined to cancel them even to attend his father's funeral. The topics reflected his broad historical interests.³⁷ He repeatedly lectured on universal history. He gave sequences of lecture courses not only on German history since the Middle Ages but also on general European history. Frequently he lectured about the most recent past, occasionally on the Romans, at times (after his research led him in that direction) on English history. During most of his career, attendance at his lectures was not good considering his renown as a historian. Only three students enrolled for his lectures on universal history in the summer of 1833, two years after he had returned from Italy. For a short time, his popularity increased. In the winter semester 1841–42, 153 auditors, almost 35 per cent of the students in the Philosophical Faculty, attended his lectures. After 1848, interest in his lectures rapidly declined. He seemed out of step with the intellectual and political climate among the students. By 1860 he had only 20 auditors left. In the summer semester of 1871 Ranke canceled his course, the last one he intended to hold and which he had once more prepared with especial care for lack of enrollment after the first meeting.³⁸ Ironically, soon after his retirement the ultra nationalistic and demagogic historian, Heinrich von Treitschke, was called to the University of Berlin. The faculty justified his appointment with the explanation that it sought "to do justice also to those circles of students who seek instruction in history for other purposes than to dedicate themselves exclusively to the study of history and historical research".³⁹

Ranke's effective influence on the development of the historical profession was through his seminars.⁴⁰ During his first semester at the University of Berlin he had already announced that he would hold exercises (*Übungen*) in his home in order to become well acquainted with and guide those students who devoted themselves seriously to history. After his return from Italy, they became a regular institution. Two types of questions were to be raised in these sessions: those relating to theory and philosophy of history and those dealing with the critical treatment of sources. The latter predominated, but Ranke never neglected to raise basic theoretical questions of historical science. The seminar was a working community. The number of participants was restricted. Generally five to 10 students participated, sometimes as few as three, only once as many as 18. Students would critically discuss each other's papers or they would together discuss an author or a group of authors. It was considered a special honor when Ranke himself assumed the criticism of a paper. The main emphasis was on critical method. He permitted the students considerable

37 For a list of lecture courses given by Ranke from 1825 to 1871, see Gunter Berg, *Leopold von Ranke*, pp.243–5; for a lengthy, although partial, list of auditors, see *ibid.*, pp.222–42; the list of lecture courses is also found in Ernst Schulin, *Die weltgeschichtliche Erfassung des Orients bei Hegel und Ranke*, Göttingen, 1958, pp.306–8.

38 Berg, pp.56–8.

39 *Ibid.*, pp.50–51.

40 Cf. *ibid.*, pp.51–6; cf. Edward G. Bourne, "Ranke and the Beginning of the Seminary Method", in *Essays in Historical Criticisms*, New York, 1901, pp.265–74.

freedom in the selection of topics and does not seem to have made their choice dependent on his own research interests. Most of the papers chose medieval themes. Beginning in 1837, his students began to publish the *Annals of the German Empire under the House of Saxony*. "These little volumes," George P. Gooch judged, "inaugurated the critical study of the Middle Ages."⁴¹ Ranke remained in close touch with the participants of the seminars over the years. It was essentially in the seminars that the "Rankean School" of historiography was born.

Ranke permitted relatively few public activities to interfere with his rigid schedule of scholarship and writing. He was largely inactive in university affairs and frequently missed meetings of the faculty. He was never elected Rektor of the university, as might have been expected in terms of his eminence and the small number of full professors at the university eligible for the position. As a matter of fact several of his colleagues occupied this position more than once. Only once did he serve as dean of the faculty. Only purely routine business was transacted during his term of office. In 1841 the new King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, who had been an admirer of Ranke for many years and was personally acquainted with him since he visited Ranke in Venice in 1828, appointed him official historiographer of the Prussian state. This, however, was a scholarly rather than a public position, which resulted in the multi-volume history of Prussia. In the years after 1848 Friedrich Wilhelm called on Ranke as an adviser and in 1854 appointed him to the newly reconstituted Council of State. Ranke's political influence was negligible, although he saw Friedrich Wilhelm regularly in the 1850s. Most of the meetings, however, seem to have been devoted to historical interests. Ranke read to the king from his manuscript on the history of France. It is not unlikely, of course, that the king also discussed political matters with him.

His other royal admirer, Maximilian II of Bavaria, unsuccessful in drawing Ranke to Munich permanently, did succeed in persuading him to accept the chairmanship of the newly formed Historical Commission at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences. Despite its Bavarian title and the financial support it received from the Bavarian state, the Commission was a central institution for the scholarly study of German history throughout the German-speaking world. Heinrich von Sybel, Ranke's former student, was its secretary. Ranke virtually chose the first members, and the Commission brought together the leading German-speaking historians. It published major series of sources and monographs such as the *Annals of the Medieval Empire* and the *Acts of the Imperial Diet* as well as the comprehensive German biographical dictionary, the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*. In 1859, with the support of the Commission, Sybel began to publish the *Historische Zeitschrift*, which has been the central journal of the German historical profession ever since. Ranke, however, did not play a significant role in the enterprise.

After the suspension of the *Historisch-Politische Zeitschrift* in 1836, he ceased

41 George P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd. edn. London, 1952, p.108.

to take a public political stand. He remained deeply afraid of social revolution. The "Political Memoranda" he wrote for King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia on the revolutionary events between 1848 and 1851 show how inflexible his opinions had remained in the face of political changes. The revolutions in Vienna and Berlin, he believed, were directed and partly financed from France. He opposed the Prussian electoral law of 1848 that granted universal male suffrage and which he feared would pave the way for a republic and the rule by artisans and journeymen who had no notion about the use of political power.⁴² He advised Friedrich Wilhelm to dissolve the assembly, restrict the suffrage, and issue a constitution that would leave ultimate political control in royal hands. The Prussian army alone, he believed, had prevented the revolution from succeeding. King and army were for him the only stable forces in Germany. Control of the army needed to be kept out of the hands of the parliament. Ranke remained lukewarm about the nationalistic movement, which he identified with the movement for democratization. He had preferred to see the preservation of a German Confederation based on an Austrian-Prussian dualism that would preserve the diversity of the German states. But after the failure of the attempt at German unification in 1848–1849 and the Prussian humiliation at Olmütz, he began to favor a policy that would establish Prussian dominance in a North German union still affiliated with a German Confederation, leaving Austria to maintain a similar position in the south. Ranke followed with misgivings the course of Bismarck's policy that led to the Austro-Prussian war of 1866. He later defended the war as having been necessary to lay the foundations of a strong German state that would meet the threat of France to Germany. He welcomed the campaign against Napoleon III, considered the defeat of France a victory of the conservative over the revolutionary principle, but greeted with mixed feelings the creation of the German Empire in 1871. He was alarmed by the concessions Bismarck made to the liberals in the years between 1871 and 1878, the introduction of universal male suffrage in the elections to the Reichstag that enabled the Social Democrats to appear on the political scene, and the legislation of the *Kulturkampf*, which threatened the religious basis upon which a stable society rested. Bismarck's break with the liberals in 1878 reassured him. Despite his fears of social revolution, Ranke did not share the pessimism of Burckhardt regarding the future of European civilization. The course of the nineteenth century had shown that conservative, restorative forces were able to maintain themselves against the forces of revolution. "European humanity," he remarked confidently in 1881, "still rests on its old foundations."⁴³

42 SW, XLIX/L, 588.

43 "Tagebuchblätter", SW, LIII/LIV, 640. The universal male suffrage introduced during the Revolution of 1848 was modified by the Prussian Constitution of 1850, which divided the electorate into three classes on the basis of tax payment, thus guaranteeing a conservative majority in the lower house, which had only limited powers. The aristocracy and the wealthy bourgeoisie were represented in the House of Lords (*Herrenhaus*).

Theory

Ranke was foremost a practicing historian, not a theorist. Nevertheless he was very conscious of the theoretical assumptions upon which his historical work rested. He sought to give these assumptions written expression at various times, in his great essays in the *Historisch-Politische Zeitschrift* of the 1830s, in the theoretical discussions (some of which survive in his unpublished lecture notes) with which he introduced many of his general lecture courses, and in random remarks scattered through his histories, letters and diaries. There is a remarkable continuity in his comments on the nature of history, from the fragment of his Luther manuscript, written at the age of 21 in the winter of 1816–1817, to his lectures in the 1860s.

Ranke belonged to a broad current of German Idealistic philosophy that permeated and dominated the social and cultural sciences in Germany throughout the nineteenth and well into the first half of the twentieth century. He was nevertheless the first important historian to explore the significance of this orientation for historical practice. This tradition, as we remarked earlier, later called ‘historicism’ or better ‘historism’ (*Historismus*) played an important role in later historical and philosophical thought in Germany, best represented by Wilhelm Windelband and Wilhelm Dilthey.⁴⁴ At the core of the historicist orientation was the insistence that man can be understood only in terms of his history, that the sciences dealing with man’s cultural creativity are historical sciences, and that the methods of the historical sciences are fundamentally different from those of the natural sciences or of traditional philosophy. The subject matter of history is living individualities, persons, institutions, cultures. But these individualities cannot be understood in terms of causal explanation. A sharp distinction exists between the inorganic, the organic, and the human historical world. The former two can be explained in terms of general laws, but there is an element of meaning, uniqueness, originality in every individual which defies rational deduction. The approach to the understanding of human facts must thus be fundamentally different from that of philosophy or natural science seeking abstractions and generalizations. “First of all, philosophy always reminds us of the claim of the supreme idea. History, on the other hand, reminds us of the conditions of existence,” Ranke writes. Philosophy, as also natural science, is always concerned with the general, with seeing the particular and considers “every particular only as a part of the whole” as part of a total process (p.37); history is always concerned with the particular, the individual. Its task is not the explanation of general relationships, but the understanding of the uniqueness of a situation, an individuality, an institution, a culture. This leads to an idealistic conception of history. For the subject matter of history is ultimately the human spirit, the unique element of personality that gives individuals in history their character.

44 On historism, see note 11; on Windelband and Dilthey, see Willey, *Back to Kant*.

For Ranke this emphasis on the understanding of the uniqueness of historical characters and situation leads to a rejection of philosophic speculation in the manner of Hegel or Schelling. To understand the unique individualities that appear in history demands a reconstruction of the past “*wie es eigentlich gewesen*”, which begins with a strict dedication to the relevant facts; therefore the insistence on strict critical method. But the factual establishment of events does not yet constitute history. The historian is not a passive observer who merely records the events of the past but, rather like the poet, he actively recreates a historical subject matter. Unlike the poet, however, he is required to rely on empirical observation and is bound by the reality of his subject matter. To grasp the reality that confronts him, he must penetrate the external events that present themselves to his empirical observation and comprehend the “causal nexus”, the greater *Zusammenhang* within history.

This demand on the historian presupposes certain theoretical assumptions. It assumes that every individual, institution or culture constitutes a meaningful unity, a *geistige Einheit*, which is capable of comprehension. To be sure, the spiritual content of a historical individuality is not immediately evident; nevertheless it permeates all expressions of the individual, the culture, or the nation. While the external facts the historian observes do not in themselves reveal this basic character, they reflect this character, and it is only through immersion in the external manifestations of the individuality that the historian can approach its basic spiritual content. Every cultural object or event, unlike a natural object or event, expresses an act of human thought or spirit. If we are dealing with a people, “we are not interested only in the individual moments of its living expressions. Rather from the totality of its development, its deeds, its institutions, and its literature, the idea speaks to us so that we simply cannot deny our attention” (p.15)*.

It is at this point that the scientific critical method merges with imaginative literature. Ranke stressed that “history is distinguished from all other sciences in that it is also an art. ... Other sciences are satisfied with simply recording what has been found; history requires the ability to recreate”. In this sense, he argues, it is related to poetry (p.8). But there is also a fundamental distinction for Ranke between history and literature. Hayden White’s reduction of Ranke’s histories to imaginative literature does not do justice for Ranke for whom history in the last analysis is not reduced to imagination but takes the real into consideration. Ranke was fascinated as a youth by Walter Scott’s historical novels, yet as Gino Benzoni⁴⁵ observes, upon reading Scott, he concluded that “historical truth is infinitely richer, more interesting, and more beautiful than are imagined events, however suggestive they might appear”.

* The numbers in the parentheses refer to the pages in this volume where the quotation from the selections are to be found.

45 Gino Benzoni, “Ranke’s Favorite Source: The Venetian Relazioni. Impressions with Allusions in Later Historiography” in Georg G. Iggers and James M. Powell, eds., *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline* (Syracuse, 1990), 45.

It would seem that for Ranke the task of the historian is fundamentally different from that of the philosopher insofar as the latter seeks eternal truths while the historian is concerned with ephemeral phenomena, people who die and institutions that sooner or later dissolve. History is flux. This position would deny that history has any meaning in a transcendent sense. Whatever meaning it has is limited to the subjective consciousness of mortal historians, the products of always changing historical situations. This, however, Ranke and the whole German Idealistic tradition in the historical and cultural sciences deny. Instead they insist that history is an objective process that can be studied scientifically and that, in fact, history is the guide, indeed the only guide, to philosophic truth so that the aims of mature philosophy and of history are not entirely dissimilar, even if their methods are fundamentally different. The historian, like the philosopher, seeks ideas of eternal validity. Already in the Luther fragments of 1816–1817, Ranke wrote:

“Since history is an empirical science, it only too often happens to her that she splits herself into specialized areas and is far removed from doing what she is generally praised for, namely educating men. Only he who weds the empirical element with the idea can truly attract the spirit.”⁴⁶

The kind of ideas the historian seeks are, however, basically different from those of the philosopher. The idea of the philosopher, for example that of Hegel, is a lifeless abstraction; the idea the historian searches for is concrete, alive and temporal. “While the philosopher, viewing history from his vantage point, seeks infinity merely in progression, development, and totality, history recognizes something in every existence” (p.11).

This “recognition”, which claims to be non-speculative, nevertheless involves a philosophic and religious assumption as speculative in nature as those upon which the Hegelian philosophy rests. History, Ranke continues, recognizes, “in every being, something eternal, coming from God; and this is its vital principle”. This recognition is beyond proof. “It is not necessary for us to prove at length that the eternal dwells in the individual. This is the religious foundation on which our efforts rest. We believe that there is nothing without God, and nothing lives except through God” (p.11).

Ranke’s conception of history, thus involves not merely a method but a firm religious faith and a highly speculative philosophy shared by much of the German Idealistic tradition in the *Geisteswissenschaften* in the nineteenth century. This philosophy, as it applies to historical study, has probably received its most concise definition in Wilhelm von Humboldt’s essay “On the Historian’s Task”⁴⁷ of which

46 “Das Luther-Fragment von 1817”, in *Deutsche Geschichte*, VI, 233.

47 Wilhelm von Humboldt, “On the Historian’s Task”, in *History and Theory*, vol. VI, 1967, pp.57–71; here cited from Georg G. Iggers and Konrad Von Moltke, eds., *Leopold von Ranke. The Theory and Practice of History*, Indianapolis, 1973, pp.5–23.

Ranke was aware. The basic ideas of Humboldt are all contained in less systematic form in Ranke's writings.

Central to Humboldt's and Ranke's conception of history is their "doctrine of ideas" (*Ideenlehre*). Humboldt writes:

"An event is only partially visible in the world of the senses; the rest has to be added by intuition, inference, and guesswork. ... The truth of any event is predicated on the addition of that invisible part of every fact, and it is this part, therefore, which the historian has to add".⁴⁸

The historian must "separate the necessary from the accidental, uncover its inner structure, and make visible the truly activating forces".⁴⁹ For Humboldt as for Ranke, the historian first of all proceeds through "the exact, impartial, critical investigation of events".⁵⁰ But after the historian has considered all the forces acting on an event,

"there still remains an even more powerfully active principle which, though not directly visible, imparts to these forces themselves their impetus and direction: that is, ideas which by their very nature lie outside the compass of the finite, and yet pervade and dominate every part of world history".⁵¹

"All life," Ranke writes, "carries its ideal in itself" (p.73). "The idea that inspires and dominates the whole, the prevailing tendency of the minds, and conditions in general, these are what determine the formation and the character of every institution" (p.60). These ideas, although eternal, are not universal. They are not abstract ideas in the sense of traditional philosophy but concrete ideas manifested in time. The theory of ideas in Humboldt and Ranke is inseparably related to their conception of individuality. "Every human individuality," Humboldt writes, "is an idea rooted in actuality"⁵². The same, he writes, is true of the individuality of nations. Similarly Ranke sees in every state the manifestation of an individualized idea. The idea is not a static principle; it is essentially the vital energy, the principle inherent in the individual that governs its growth. "The innermost urge of spiritual life," Ranke writes, "is movement toward its idea, toward greater perfection. This urge is innate in it, implanted in it at its origin" (p.73).

This theory of ideas has been called 'neo-Platonic'.⁵³ It assumes a universe less closely akin to the mechanistic cosmos of Newton than to the view of Leibniz, which conceives the world in terms of self-contained monads, each governed by

48 Ibid., pp.5–6.

49 Ibid., p.10.

50 Ibid., p.7.

51 Ibid., p.19.

52 Ibid., p.21.

53 Cf. Carl Hinrichs, *Ranke und die Geschichtstheologie der Goethezeit*, Friedrich Meinecke, *Historism*.

an inner principle of development yet in harmony in its growth with the will of God. Newton's universe can be reduced to mathematical terms; in the world of Ranke and Humboldt, quality defies reduction to quantity. The ideas have their origin in the will of God.⁵⁴ The conception of individuals as the expression of an idea inherent within them limits the applicability of the principle of causation to the historical scene. For the idea itself can never be subjected to the laws governing nature. It is governed by a law of its own. The uniqueness of individuality guarantees a residue of spontaneity and freedom in history that defies all determinism. Regularity and growth can be understood only in terms of the unique principles inherent in the individualities that compose history. The origin of individuality remains a mystery.

Historical knowledge is possible because both the historian and his subject are part of the process of history and both have their basis in God's will. Ranke reminds us that history is concerned not merely with the collection of facts but with understanding these facts. But this understanding proceeds only from the intuitive contemplation (*Anschauung*) of the historical subject matter. Such contemplation for Ranke requires that the historian consciously avoid projecting his subjectivity into the subject of inquiry. "The ideal of historical culture would consist in enabling the subject to make himself the pure organ of the object."⁵⁵ But the process of cognition is not exhausted by empirical observation, nor is it deductive, for abstract concepts cannot grasp historical reality. It is rather an intuitive one, in which the active intellect grasps the essence of its subject matter. In contemplating the particular (*Betrachtung des Einzelnen*), the way opens itself to the historian to the recognition of the "course which ... the world in general has taken" (p.6), a course which both Humboldt and Ranke agree can never be fully known but only divined (*ahnen*).

Involved in the theory of individuality is a highly optimistic philosophy of value. As we already suggested, there lurks behind Ranke's avowed Lutheran religiosity an outlook basically incompatible with orthodox Protestant belief. Because every individuality is the manifestation of an idea that has its origin in God, there is no room for evil. The ethical task of every historical individual, every nation, and every state for Ranke, is the full development of its self. All

54 Ernst Troeltsch sought to trace the German Idealistic conception of the state as an expression of the will of God to Luther. Relying on Paul's admonition that "there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God", Romans 13:1, Luther, Troeltsch argued, basically transformed the traditional Christian conception of natural law, which posited a universally valid moral absolute by which the actions of states could be judged. The historically existing authorities themselves, Luther reasoned according to Troeltsch, were the concrete and individualized manifestations of natural law and were to be judged in terms of their own inherent principles rather than by external criteria. See Ernst Troeltsch, *Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen in Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. I, Tübingen, 1919, especially 560–71. Translated by Olive Wyon as *The Social Doctrines of the Christian Churches*, 2 vols, London, 1932.

55 Ranke, "On the Relation and Distinction between History and Politics", in Ranke, *The Secret of World History: Selected Writings*, ed. Roger Wines, New York, 105–17; pages 75–82 in this volume.

values assume a concrete historical form, as the specific values of historical individualities. Not philosophy but history is the true guide to value. The values embodied in historical societies are not temporal, fleeting attitudes; they are timeless ideas, but they have no universal general validity. They relate only to concrete historical individuals or institutions. In this sense, Ranke's call for impartiality (*Unparteilichkeit*) must be understood. We must "view every existence as permeated with original life". Where there is a conflict of values, "both parties must be viewed on their own ground, in their own environment, so to speak, in their own ... inner state. ... it is not up to us to judge about error and truth as such," Ranke continues. The ability to portray the forces of history without interjecting one's own set of values is the core of objectivity. The historian himself will have value positions. History centers on values. Yet Ranke calls for a value-free understanding of these values:

"It would be impossible not to have one's own set of values in the midst of all the struggles of powers and of ideas which bear within them decisions of the greatest magnitude. Even so, the essence of impartiality can be preserved, for this consists merely in recognizing the positions occupied by the acting forces and in respecting the unique relationships which characterize each of them. One observes how these forces appear in their distinctive identity, confront and struggle with one another; the events and the fates which dominate the world take place in this opposition. Objectivity is also always impartiality."⁵⁶

Such a conception, which stresses the ethical autonomy of every individual and every culture, should logically exclude the idea that there is progress in history. For every stage of history must be judged as an end in itself, not as a step in a progression to a higher state. "Every epoch is immediate to God," Ranke observes, "and its worth is not at all based on what derives from it but rests in its own existence, in its own self" (p.21).

Nevertheless Ranke is not fully consistent. In his histories he steadfastly assumes the superiority of the Christian religion and of Protestantism, and is convinced of the essential soundness of the civilization of the nineteenth century. Confident about the future of modern civilization, Ranke writes to King Maximilian II of Bavaria in 1859:

"Until now cultural (*geistige*) development in the Western nations has ever progressed and is still progressing in spite of the greatest obstacles and adverse interventions. Why should this not continue? For the goal has not yet been reached by far and the cultural road is perhaps infinite."⁵⁷

56 "Vorwort", *Die deutschen Mächte und der Fürstenbund. Deutsche Geschichte von 1780 bis 1790*, in *SW*, XXXI/XXXII, vii–viii.

57 Letter to King Maximilian II, von Bayern, Berlin, 26 November 1859, in *SW*, LIII/LIV, p.404–5; cf. *SW*, XXV, ix.

Similarly, the thread of progress runs through his *Universal History*, which seeks to show how “in the course of centuries the human race has won for itself a sort of heirloom in the material and social progress which it has made, but still more in its religious development” (p.104). Elsewhere he argues that “since Christendom and with it true morality and religion appeared, there can be no progress in these areas”. In fact he recognizes only one civilization, that of the Christian West. Admittedly China had developed a civilization, but it stagnated and converted to barbarism. The same was true of the early stages of the Muslim caliphates. All other societies in Asia and all of Africa from his view still represented barbarism in his day. In fact, he asserts, history has shown that there are peoples who are not capable of civilization.

Ranke’s political philosophy is spelled out in its most systematic form in the essay, “A Dialogue on Politics”, reproduced in this volume, but finds theoretical formulation in many of his essays in the *Historisch-Politische Zeitschrift* and in his inaugural address “On the Relation of and Distinction Between History and Politics”, also in this volume, and serves as a foundation of his historical writings. His political theory is an application of his theory of ideas and the doctrine of individuality. The state, he argues, is not a conglomeration of individuals bound by a social contract, nor is it a mere concentration of power. Rather, every state rests on a spiritual basis. The “states are individuals” and as such they are manifestations of an individualized, eternal idea in history. All states “are motivated by special tendencies of their own” and “these tendencies are of a spiritual nature” (p.66). A state’s fundamental idea directs its development and “penetrates and dominates its entire environment” (p.66). This idea is of divine origin. “Instead of the passing conglomerations which the contractual theory of the state creates like cloud formations,” Ranke perceives, “spiritual substances, original creations of the human mind – I might say, thoughts of God” (p.66). Each state is unique, different in its idea, its spirit, its development and needs, from all others. Similarities between states are purely formal – for example, all states have some form of constitution – but these formal similarities do not touch the essence of the state. “There is an element which makes a state not a subdivision of general categories, but a living thing, an individual, a unique self” (p.61). The uniqueness of the state makes it impossible to transfer political institutions to another state, for example French or English parliamentarism to Prussia without fundamentally changing the content and nature of these institutions. “Identical institutions, of the same purpose, resting on common historical foundations, still assume, as we saw, the most divergent forms in different countries” (pp.60).

Ranke’s position involves a radical rejection of the theory of natural law and of the rights of man. The state must not be judged by any external criteria. It is a law unto itself which must be understood in terms of its inherent principle of growth. The individuals have no claim to the state. “It would be ridiculous to explain (the states) as ever so many police departments for the benefit of those individuals who, let us say, have made a contract for the protection of private property” (p.66). Rather the individual can fulfill himself only within the state. “There is no purely private existence for him. He would not be himself, did he not belong to

this particular state as his spiritual fatherland" (p.70). The state, however, must be guided in its actions by its best interests and these interests Ranke interprets primarily in terms of foreign affairs. "The position of a state in the world depends on the degree of independence it has attained" (p.65). The cultural creativity of a state depends on its power. The great age of French literature corresponded to that of French power under Louis XIV; Frederick the Great set much of the foundation of Germany's cultural revival. "A nation must feel independent in order to develop freely, and never has a literature flourished save when a climax of history prepared the way for it" (p.44). It is necessary therefore for the state "to organize all its internal resources for the purpose of self-preservation" (p.65), to subordinate considerations of domestic politics to the demands of foreign policy. The area of international relations is viewed, however, as a battlefield in which every state must fight for its independence and its rights. The central concern of the state must be power on the international scene.

This emphasis on power for Ranke is, however, linked with his conviction that power is never brute force but rather an expression of spiritual energy:

"For it would be infinitely wrong to seek in the struggles of historical powers only the work of brute force, and thus to grasp only the transitory in its external manifestation: no state has ever existed without a spiritual (*geistige*) basis and a spiritual content. In power itself a spiritual essence manifests itself. An original genius, which has its own life. ... It is the task of history to observe this life, which cannot be characterized through only one idea or one word" (pp.6–7).

War, for Ranke as for Hegel, is therefore not a misfortune but a testing of ethical forces. "You will be able to name few significant wars," Ranke confidently asserts, "for which it could not be proved that genuine moral energy achieved the final victory" (p.65). There is no real danger of war destroying the foundations of civilizations. Ranke recognized that the French Revolution brought about an intensification in the nature of warfare and that "now the nations, armed as they are, fight almost man for man, with all their might" (p.55). Nevertheless, he is convinced, as he suggests in the essay on "The Great Powers" that "world history does not present such a chaotic tumult, warring, and planless succession of states and peoples as appear at first sight" (p.52). There is a balance of power at work in the relations of states, and although "world agitations now and again destroy this system of law and order ... after they have subsided, it is reconstituted" (p.33).

The protestations with which Ranke and much of the tradition of German historicism greeted the Hegelian philosophy of history make us overlook the close affinities that existed between the two orientations. Both saw history as a meaningful and essentially benevolent process in which spiritual forces assumed concrete reality in social and political institutions. Ranke's and Hegel's view of the state were particularly close. Both insisted that the state was the manifestation of an "ethical idea" that in Hegel's words, "each nation as an existing individuality

is guided by its particular principles”⁵⁸ and that the state was not subject to external moral principles or to considerations of human rights in the pursuit of its political interests, particularly in the area of international relations. Power possessed a spiritual basis and war had an ethical element. The victor in war represented the higher moral energies and so world history, for Ranke as for Hegel, became in a sense the world court of justice.⁵⁹

The implications of theory for Ranke’s historical practice

These theoretical ideas determined Ranke’s work from his early writings in his 20s to the *Universal History* begun at the age of 85. Very early he wrote that he intended to devote himself to broadly universal history and that he was particularly interested in “learning something of the lives of the nations in the fifteenth century”, a period of transition to the modern world.⁶⁰ Yet he makes it quite clear in his first major publication, *The Histories of the Latin and Germanic Peoples – 1494–1514* (1824), that he is not writing a chronology of events but the story of a specific historical unit, namely that which he identifies as the Latin and Germanic Peoples (p.135). This unit, which has grown organically since Roman times, is not identical with Europe, which would include the Slavic countries, i.e. Greek Orthodox Russia and Moslem Turkey. As he mentions elsewhere, Kiev and Smolensk represent a world that is more alien to us than New York and Lima, which are parts of the Latin and Germanic heritage, or, if you wish, of the West.⁶¹ The late 15th century is crucial to the formation of the modern political and religious world.

Ranke planned to write a second volume leading up to 1535, which would have included the Reformation. There are two closely interwoven institutions – the state and the church – which determine the character of the world with which Ranke is dealing. Politically the transition to the modern world is marked in the Italian wars by the replacement of the Italian city states by two great powers, Habsburg Spain and France, in conflict for the control of Italy. The monarchy emerges as the key political institution of the modern world, and while religion and religiosity by no means decline, they assume a different more purified form with the Reformation (with which Ranke intended to deal in the projected second volume and some years later in his history of the Reformation), by which the power of the Papacy over the central states would be curbed. It is striking how sharply Ranke’s view of the emergence of the modern world differs from that of his student Jacob Burckhardt in his *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, for whom the transition

58 Hegel, *Selections*, ed. Jacob Loewenberg, p.468; state as ethical idea, p.443.

59 For a comparison of Hegel and Ranke, see Schulin, *Weltgeschichtliche Erfassung des Orients*.

60 Ranke to Heinrich Ranke, Frankfurt a. O., Ende März 1820, in *Das Briefwerk*, ed. Walther Peter Fuchs, Hamburg, 1949, p.17.

61 *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker 1494 bis 1514*, 1st edn, 1824, p.xxxix. See also Schulin, “Rankes erstes Buch”, 591; also Schulin, *Weltgeschichtliche Erfassung des Orients*, p.160.

to modernity occurs foremost in the cultural sphere with the emergence of a new mentality exactly in those city states that Ranke assigns to an older world.

Perhaps more important than the narrative account in this volume was the appendix *In Criticism of Modern Historians*, which raised the critical criteria on which scholarly history should rest. As we have mentioned above, he insisted that to meet scholarly criteria all history must be based on the critical examination of primary sources. Also as mentioned above, he accused Guicciardini and Giovio, who had been considered the authorities for the very period with which Ranke now dealt, as not having met these standards.

Ranke now went in two different directions. The second volume of the *Histories of the Latin and Germanic Peoples* never appeared. Instead, between 1827 and 1836 he published four volumes dealing with the Spanish monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, which basically strayed away from his commitment to write a history of the Western, i.e. the Latin-Germanic world. While in Italy between 1828 and 1831, he became very interested in Italian art and literature and subsequently published a volume on each.⁶²

On the basis of his archival studies, Ranke turned first to the history of the Papacy, then to that of the Reformation, and then to that of the major European states – Prussia, France and England – only to return to universal history in his old age. How did national histories fit into his concept of a universal history of the Latin and Germanic peoples as a historical unit?⁶³ He held on to this concept all his life, but now wrote national histories, which he nevertheless sought to fit into a broader Latin-Germanic context. The history of the Reformation, entitled *German History in the Era of the Reformation*, already centered on German rather than general European development. What interested him, nevertheless, as he wrote in the preface to his French history, was the world-historical, not merely the national significance of the history of the various nations (p.148). On the one hand he was convinced that the Latin-Germanic or Western world was a unit going back to the Roman period; on the other he compared this unit with the ancient Chinese and the Roman Empire. While he maintained that the Chinese and Roman empires were administratively centralized regimes, something which failed to take cognizance of the role of autonomous city states and of regions in the Roman Empire, the Latin-Germanic world was marked by decentralization and pluralism. For Ranke, as we saw in the “Political Dialogue” and the essay “The Great Powers”, each state possessed a character of its own, and made its particular contribution to the emergence of the system of the great powers that is a central theme of Ranke’s national history. As he approaches the eighteenth century, France manifests the Catholic-monarchical principle; England the

62 *Zur Geschichte der italienischen Kunst*, in SW, vol. 51–2; *Zur Geschichte der italienischen Poesie*, Berlin, 1837.

63 See Ernst Schulz, “Universalgeschichte und Nationalgeschichte bei Leopold von Ranke”, in Wolfgang J. Mommsen, ed., *Leopold von Ranke und die moderne Geschichtswissenschaft*, Stuttgart, 1999, pp.37–71.

Germanic-maritime and parliamentary principle; Russia, which under the leadership of Peter the Great had entered the European sphere, represents the Slavic-Greek; Austria the Catholic-monarchical German; and Prussia the German-Protestant-military principle. In each state, perhaps with the exception of parliamentary England, a powerful monarch such as Peter the Great, Louis XIV and Frederick the Great molded the modern character of their states.

Taken together, Ranke's histories present a monumental analysis of the growth of modern Europe. The *History of the Popes* (1834–36) interested him less for its own sake, for the Papacy “no longer exercises any essential influence”, but does as “a portion of general history, of the overall development of the modern world” (145–6). It includes not only the immediate sphere of the popes' political influence in Italy, nor merely their impact as spiritual head of the Catholic Church, but also the course of Catholic religion in an emerging modern world. Nowhere is this more evident than in his treatment of the life of Sixtus V. Interwoven in his biography is a long disquisition on the “Idea of Modern Catholicism”, a section that clearly expresses what Ranke sees as the impact of the Papacy on European history in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. If the Church had once fulfilled the purpose of molding the Germanic and Latin peoples of Europe into a common Christian civilization, and the existence of the papal authority was necessary in the earlier phases of the world's progress, this power was now challenged by the new forces of nationality and of the modern monarchies in a period when “the ecclesiastical power was no longer as necessary as before to the well being of nations”. The Vatican reacted to the book by placing it on the Index.

The *German History in the Era of the Reformation* (1839–47) that followed the *History of the Popes* is the most personal of Ranke's works in that it clearly reveals his German Protestant background while still achieving a remarkably balanced account. In this work, Ranke sees the Protestant Reformation not merely as a religious but also as a political phenomenon – the struggle of the German princes against the control of both the emperors and the popes. The result of the conflict is the purification of Christian religion and the awakening of the German nationality. Unlike Hegel, Ranke does not see the logic of history as the driving force of history; instead, great individuals play a decisive role in all later histories. “It was not, as we see, the quiet course of events alone or the noiseless progressive development of political and legal relations which established princely power, but mainly clever politics, successful wars, and the force of powerful personalities.”⁶⁴

The books on the papacy and the Reformation were followed by three major histories of states, concentrating on the rise of the Great Powers: *Nine Books of Prussian History* (1847–48), *Civil Wars and Monarchy in France* (1852–61) and *History of England Principally in the sixteenth and seventeenth Centuries* (1859–66), each seeking to deal with a period in which the national history of each country “through the importance of the events ... acquired in itself a world historical character” (p.148). The *Nine Books of Prussian History*, later expanded

to *Twelve Books of Prussian History*, is in a sense a continuation of the work on the Reformation as a study of the major Protestant German state. It follows the history of the Hohenzollern family from the fifteenth century on, but focuses on the eighteenth century and particularly on the reign of Frederick the Great, during which Prussia emerged as a major power. Ranke's study does not attempt to read a German national mission into Prussian history or to portray Austria as the main antagonist of German unity, as Johann Gustav Droysen does in his history of Prussia.⁶⁵ Rather, Prussia emerged as a major force in the eighteenth century to fill the power vacuum in northern Germany and equilibrate the European balance of power. The *Civil Wars and Monarchy in France* dealt with the consolidation of monarchical power in France, which contended not only with the internal opposition of the nobility but also with the power of the Spanish Habsburgs. Again the story is told in terms of politico-religious conflicts, which are seen not only as clashes of doctrines or struggles for power but also in relation to the international balance of power. The latter, especially the threat of the Habsburgs, forced the French state to place political over confessional considerations. Similar forces are at work in Ranke's *History of England* in which the religious conflict is inseparably related to the constitutional struggle and the Revolution of 1688, and is not merely seen as a victory for constitutionalism and Protestantism within England but as a check against the hegemonial ambitions of France. Ranke portrays the direct involvement of German Protestant states and especially of Holland in the events of 1688 as motivated not merely by religious convictions but also by cold reason of state.

Several monographic studies followed these major works in the 1870s, continuing Ranke's histories of the Reformation and of Prussia and dealing for the first time extensively with the era of the French Revolution. More important, however, Ranke finally undertook in 1880 to write a universal history which was to stress the continuity of a civilization that would endure. He was 85. In 1830 he had written of his desire to write a broad cultural history that would be "no longer national, but wholly universal".⁶⁶ To an extent this is what he now did, although the history of literature, philosophy and art remained marginal, embedded within the framework of the political struggle for existence. As he wrote in the preface to the *Universal History*:

"But historical development does not alone rest on the tendency toward civilization. It arises also from impulses of a very different kind, especially from the rivalry of nations engaged in conflict with each other for the possession of the soil or for political supremacy. It is in and through this conflict, which always also affects the domains of culture, that the great powers of history are formed. In their unceasing struggle for dominion the

65 Droysen, *Geschichte der preußischen Politik*, 5 vols, Leipzig, 1868–86; see also Robert Southard, *Droysen and the Prussian School of History*, Lexington, Kentucky, 1955.

66 Ranke to Heinrich Ranke, Rom, Anfang April 1830, *Briefwerk*, p.209.

peculiar characteristics of each nation are modified by universal tendencies, but at the same time resist them and react to them” (pp.103–4).

His history turned out not to be universal in the sense he had prescribed, embracing “the events of all times and nations” (p.103), but was a history of the West. His task was to show the development of a heritage upon which modern civilization firmly rested since Antiquity. At the time of his death, he had traced the story from the ancient Near Eastern civilizations to the death of Otto the Great. His students, using his notes, continued the history to the beginning of modern times and completed the work by publishing the lectures “On the Epochs of Modern History”, which Ranke delivered to King Maximilian II of Bavaria in 1854.

These lectures, which were only published posthumously in 1888, have been considered a classic. Together with Droysen’s *Historik* (Principles of History) and Burckhardt’s *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* (Force and Freedom, An Interpretation of History), which were also published posthumously, they are seen as one of the three greatest works of German historiography in the nineteenth century and of continued significance for historical thought.⁶⁷ It is the only time that Ranke presented a comprehensive view of Western history, or what he considered to be universal history, from the Roman period to the nineteenth century, foreshadowing what he had in mind in the uncompleted *Universal History*. There is controversy today over the degree to which this is actually the work of Ranke. No text written by Ranke of the lectures exists, but only a stenographic account and a written version prepared for him, which at many points deviates from the stenographic text. Ranke did not assign a title to these lectures; the title by which we know the lectures was formulated by Alfred Dove, Ranke’s student and the editor of his works.⁶⁸

King Maximilian asked Ranke to define what he considered to be the character, in Ranke’s terms the “leading ideas” (*leitende Ideen*), of the various epochs of modern history – modern going back to the formation of the Western world in the Rome of the early Christian period. In the very first lecture Ranke rejects two conceptions, the idea of progress and the philosophy of history in the Hegelian manner, as inapplicable to history. Yet on further thought he shies away from the term of “leading ideas” as too abstract, and instead sets out to identify the tendencies (*Tendenzen*) that mark the epochs of modern, that is Western, history. The Oriental elements of the most ancient history are not destroyed but transformed by the Greeks and transmitted to Rome. For him the crucial period of Roman history is not the republic but the empire. It is there that the basic institutions are

67 Theodor Schieder, “Einleitung”, in Leopold von Ranke, *Über die Epochen der neueren Geschichte*, Historisch-kritische ed., Theodor Schieder and Helmut Berding, eds., München, 1971, p.7.

68 Schieder, “Einleitung”, pp.7–39; Günter Johannes Henz, “Rankes fälschlich so benannte Vorträge *Über die Epochen der neueren Geschichte*. Eine Untersuchung zu Schein und Sein der Überlieferung”, *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 83, 2009, pp.408–51.

shaped – the monarchy, the law code (*ius gentium*) and, most important, the Christian world religion – that provide the foundation for the Western culture to come. With migrations this culture takes on its Latin-Germanic character and is finally separated from the East, which ultimately comes under the domination of Islam. The epoch initiated by the Carolingian empire sees the formation of modern nationalities, the dualism of Church and a decentralized Empire, with the Papacy emerging as the dominant political force. The Reformation marks the revolt of the princes and the towns against Papacy and Empire. The post-Reformation period, beginning with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, sees the emergence of the great powers. It is striking how little attention Ranke pays to the role of the economy, to the scientific revolution in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, or to the Enlightenment. Trade, he recognizes, is a factor in the establishment of the Dutch and English colonial empires and he is aware of the development of industry and the natural sciences in the nineteenth century, but has little to say about the social transformations of the Europe of his time.

Throughout the history of the West, religion plays a significant role in the shaping of political decisions; he surprisingly sees in it a main motivation for the Spanish and Portuguese overseas explorations and discoveries, such as the sea route to India, as a means to more effectively confront the Moslems, so that the spirit of the Crusades remains alive in a much later period. He does not mention economic or geopolitical considerations. On the other hand, he recognizes that the modern states subordinate their religious faiths to the exigencies of power on the international scale.

It is interesting that Ranke assigns great world historical significance to the American Revolution. Its significance lies in the fact that there republicanism is no longer a pure idea but has a firm foundation in a state. The French Revolution cannot be understood without the impact of the ideas of the American Revolution. The nineteenth century is marked by the confrontation of the idea of popular sovereignty with that of monarchy. If popular sovereignty were to triumph, the result would be the abolition of monarchy and ultimately communism. But the progress of popular sovereignty, Ranke assures the worried king, would produce a reaction and the restoration of a powerful monarchy.

It is not clear why these lectures with their simple, one might say shallow generalizations were so well received by a broad German public. This has much to do with the political climate in Germany well into the twentieth century. It is interesting that the lectures were almost the only works of Ranke that were reprinted in the twentieth century – as late as 1971 a critical edition appeared. I was able to find only a single translation into a foreign language, one into Russian in 1898, none since then.

Conclusion: Ranke's impact on later historical thought and practice

Ranke's influence on German historiography cannot be overestimated. There has even been a renewed interest in him in recent years, although different aspects of his thought have moved to the foreground. After 1945, German historians

reexamined their national tradition of historiography in the light of the political catastrophe of the years 1933 to 1945, which also involved a reexamination of Ranke's basic presuppositions. The positivistic interpretation of Ranke never took hold in Germany, but has also faded outside of Germany where the roots of his historical thought in German Idealism have been recognized, and he is no longer seen primarily as a scientific but as a great narrative historian.

Ranke's two major contributions to the national tradition of academic history in Germany were his adaptation of critical method to historical study and his conception of the state. The former was integrated into historical practice not only in Germany but throughout the world as historical scholarship became increasingly a university-centered profession. The latter, the conception of the central position of the state as an ethical institution, the emphasis on the power position of the state in international affairs, and the subordination of domestic to foreign policy, remained intact in Germany well into the twentieth century and was seriously challenged only after 1945. To be sure, Ranke's historical writing was viewed very critically by many of his students even in his life time, not on methodological but on political grounds. This rejection was particularly pronounced among the historians of the so-called Prussian school who viewed historical scholarship as an instrument of German unification. Ranke's student, Heinrich von Sybel, regretted Ranke's lack of warmth and overly great concern with technical considerations.⁶⁹

Ranke was politically out of step with the historians of the Prussian school. He recognized the "rejuvenation of the national spirit in the whole compass of European peoples and states" (p.98), but saw this new nationalism as a force that would strengthen the existing powers and support the balance of power. The historians of the Prussian school rejected Ranke's concept of the European system of great powers, which they believed maintained the conservative status quo. Foreign policy, Droysen insisted, must be determined by national interest and conducted openly in the presence of public opinion rather than by secret diplomacy. Prussia must cease to be European and become German. Her primary aim must be the unification of Germany and the pursuit of German national interests, not the balance of power.

Nationalism for the Prussian school was linked, at least until 1866, to a liberalism for which Ranke had little sympathy, a liberalism, however, which always subordinated domestic political aims to the demands of the reason of state and, indeed, saw in political reform an instrument for strengthening the national state rather than an end in itself. The more conservative atmosphere of the German Empire brought with it a new appreciation for Ranke's "objectivity", for his conception of the state as standing above parties. The "Neo-Rankeans", a generation of historians at the turn of the century advocating German imperial

69 On Sybel, see Volker Dotterweich, *Heinrich von Sybel. Geschichtswissenschaft in politischer Absicht*, Göttingen, 1978; Wilfried Nippel, *Johann Gustav Droysen. Ein Leben zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik*, München, 2008.

expansion, sought to project Ranke's conception of the balance of power from a European to a world scene.⁷⁰

By the turn of the century, the Rankean tradition of political history based on the critical analysis of documents, which by then dominated historical scholarship not only in Germany but throughout the world, was seriously challenged by the "New Historians" in the United States, by Henri Berr and the forerunners of the *Annales* in France, and by Karl Lamprecht in Germany. The Rankean conception of "scientific history", these men held, was inadequate for the understanding of the social, economic and cultural transformation of the modern world, a revolt which led to an increasing concern to link history with the social sciences. While in the United States and France this opened the way to an interdisciplinary social history, in Germany Karl Lamprecht's initiative resulted in a bitter controversy: the famous *Methodenstreit* (conflict about methods). The historical profession saw in Lamprecht a threat not only to German historiographical but also political traditions. The failure of Germany to achieve parliamentary government in the nineteenth century was reflected in the opposition of the basically conservative and nationally-oriented German academic establishment to Lamprecht's approach. These men saw in the German Idealistic tradition, with its rejection of social analysis, its reverence for the state, and its concern with the role of individual statesmen in historical change, the ideological foundation for the political and social order that had emerged in Germany with Bismarck's defeat of the Prussian liberals and with his unification of Germany under the auspices of a semi-autocratic Prussian monarchy.

The defeat of Germany in World War I and the effects of the Treaty of Versailles solidified the hold of the Rankean idealistic tradition over German historians. The 1920s saw a steady increase in the interest in social history in France, Belgium and the United States, which was not shared to that extent in Germany. As German historians passionately disputed the thesis of German war guilt contained in the Treaty of Versailles, they increasingly viewed the turn to social history as subversive of German national political and intellectual traditions. This rejection included even the relatively conservative, state-oriented type of social history best represented before World War I by Gustav Schmoller and Otto Hintze.⁷¹

Only after 1945 was there a serious reexamination of the Rankean tradition of historiography in Germany. Friedrich Meinecke, then the dean of German historians, in his now famous lecture on "Ranke and Burckhardt" in 1948, suggested that Burckhardt, with his deep pessimism regarding men, material civilization, power and the masses, had understood the modern world more correctly than Ranke. Meinecke now recognized that Ranke's idealistic notion of

70 See Hans-Heinz Krill, *Die Ranke Renaissance: Max Lenz und Erich Marcks*, Berlin, 1962; Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "Ranke and the Neo-Rankean School in Germany", in Iggers and Powell, *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline*, pp. 124-40.

71 See Bernd Faulenbach, *Ideologie des deutschen Weges: Die deutsche Geschichte in der Historiographie zwischen Kaiserreich und Nationalsozialismus*, München, 1980.

the state guided by reason of state was no longer tenable. It was questionable, however, whether he was right when he predicted that Burckhardt in the mid-twentieth century would still have greater importance than Ranke for us and for later historians.⁷² Burckhardt concerned himself with the cultural life of elites and less with the relation of culture to the wider context of society that now interested historians.

The social sciences reentered West German historiography largely by way of the sociology of Max Weber. Weber, who died in 1920, had written in the early part of the century, but his influence only made itself felt posthumously in a limited sense in the 1920s, and was fully felt in Germany only after 1945. He succeeded in combining the best in the German Idealistic tradition – the recognition of historical individuality that was lacking in much of Western sociology – with a recognition of the role of general concepts in social science and history. H. Stuart Hughes observed that Weber “introduce(d) conceptual rigor into a tradition where either intuition or a naive concern for the ‘facts’ had hitherto ruled unchallenged.”⁷³ Fully acknowledging the residues of irrationality in human behavior, Weber nevertheless recognized that such behavior is never without a degree of structure and regularity. Unpredictability, he observed, is the privilege of the insane. These elements of recurrence and structure permitted the formulation of generalizations of limited scope, which took into full account the uniqueness of every historical situation, but which made nevertheless the comparability of people, social systems and cultures possible. Thus for Weber, as for Western social science-oriented historians, history had both a narrative and an analytical function. Deeply influenced by Weber, Otto Hintze in the 1920s sought to bridge the gap between Ranke’s event-oriented political history and Weber’s analysis of social institutions.

However, only after 1945 was the hold of the German Idealistic tradition sufficiently weakened to permit the introduction of sociological and political science concepts and methods into German historiography. The concepts and methods of political science for the first time occupied an important role in the analysis of modern political processes in a work such as K. D. Bracher’s *Auflösung der Weimarer Republik* (Disintegration of the Weimar Republic) (1955). Marxism played a relatively insignificant role in German historical scholarship outside of East Germany. Nevertheless, the great controversy aroused by Fritz Fischer’s work, *Griff nach der Weltmacht*, published in 1961, which gave major responsibility for the outbreak of World War I to German expansionist aims (a shortened English version, *Germany’s Aims in the First World War*, appeared in 1967) involved not only the reassessment of German political traditions but of historiographical practices.

72 English: “Ranke and Burckhardt”, in Hans Kohn, ed., *German History: Some New German Views*, (Boston, 1954), pp.142–56.

73 H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890–1930*, New York, 1958, pp.302–3.

But already in the 1920s two important reactions against the Rankean paradigm occurred among a younger generation educated after World War I, on the margins of the academic profession, coming from diametrically opposed political positions. The first consisted of students of Friedrich Meinecke who, although not sharing their historiographical views, was willing to work with them. These young historians were deeply influenced by Weber and by Marx's class analysis and his stress on the economic factors that affect politics, without being Marxist in a political sense but rather generally Social Democrats and supporters of the Weimar Republic. They all, without exception, were forced into emigration after Hitler's accession to power.⁷⁴

The other reaction came from the advocates of *Volksgeschichte* (people's history),⁷⁵ ardent supporters of the Nazi regime. They criticized the "history from above" of the Rankean tradition and called for a "history from below", but viewed the *Volk* in biological terms as the Aryan race committed to replacing the Slavs to make room for living space for German settlers in the East and eliminating the Jews. They cherished the ideal of the return to a pre-modern agrarian society. The two principal advocates and practitioners of *Volksgeschichte* during the Nazi period, Werner Conze and Theodor Schieder, after 1945 broke with their racial and agrarian ideology, and Conze founded a "Working Circle for Modern Social History". This stress on modernity deemphasized the confrontation with the Nazi past, which they saw as a phenomenon of modern mass societies with few specific roots in the German national past. They became the most important mentors of young historians educated in the Federal Republic who soon were to occupy key roles in the academic establishment. Historians of his generation, such as Hans-Ulrich Wehler, differed fundamentally in their political and historiographical outlook from their mentors. Their main concern, as well as that of even younger historians not trained by Conze and Schieder, like Jürgen Kocka, was how it was possible for the Nazi regime to come to power and carry out its reign of terror and mass murder with the acquiescence of broad segments of the German population. Unlike their mentors, they believed that the rise of Nazism has to be understood in terms of the uneven modernization in which the development of an industrial society was not accompanied by political democratization, as it was in Western societies.⁷⁶ They called for a positive reorientation of German political awareness to the Western model that had long been rejected. They also believed in the need to break with German Idealistic traditions of historical studies, including Ranke, and turn to Western, particularly Anglo-American, social science theories and practices. They called for a "historical social science" to examine the German past

74 Gerhard A. Ritter, ed., *Friedrich Meinecke: Akademischer Lehrer und emigrierte Schüler*, München, 2006.

75 Willi Oberkrome, *Methodische Innovation und völkische Ideologisierung in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft 1918–1945*, Göttingen, 1993.

76 An early seminal work in this direction was Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Das deutsche Kaiserreich*, Göttingen, 1973; English: *The German Empire 1871–1918*, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, UK, 1985.

and present in a transnational context. They also turned again to the historians and social theorists who had been forced into exile.⁷⁷

By the 1980s there was a reaction against the analytical “historical social science” by critics who protested that this approach, with its concentration on structures and processes, neglected the “everyday life” of common people. In one sense, like Ranke they rejected abstractions and generalizations and called on concretely “understanding” the intentions of individuals, turning away from sociology and economics to anthropology to fathom the concrete meaning of cultures in which these individuals lived, rather than seeking explanations guided by theories. Yet the individuals with whom they dealt were common people, including, and this is important, women and people on the margins of society. Instead of the tendencies in history that both the Rankeans and post-Rankeans as well as the practitioners of historical social science pursued, they denied that such tendencies could be defined and called for “micro-history” to replace the “macro-histories” of conventional historiography.⁷⁸

This new historical orientation reflected the emerging postmodern mood. By this time the positivist interpretation of Ranke, which had never taken hold in Germany, had been abandoned in America as well, where two important studies of Ranke by Theodore Von Laue and Leonard Krieger discussed the roots of Ranke’s historical thought in German Idealism and Protestant religiosity.⁷⁹ Recent years have seen a revived interest in Ranke both in Germany and abroad. However, he was now no longer seen as the father of historical science but as one of the great narrative historians of the nineteenth century. His importance lay in the transition that his work marked between erudite scholarship and modern forms of historical narrative. Hayden White went furthest in seeing Ranke as essentially a historical novelist.⁸⁰ For White, history was an expression of poetic imagination, i.e. a form of literature. Research did not determine historical writing but merely served as the subject matter for a historical story. In the final analysis, there were no clear distinctions between the history and fiction.⁸¹ White fitted Ranke’s histories into a structuralist scheme, which predetermined the ways in which Ranke wrote history, his political conservatism, his organicist conception of society, and his “comic”, that is optimistic outlook on history, which are all

77 Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Historische Sozialwissenschaft und Geschichtsschreibung*, Göttingen, 1980; also Georg G. Iggers, *New Directions in European Historiography*, Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press, 1975.

78 See Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century. From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, 2nd edn, Middletown, CT, 2005.

79 See more recently, J. D. Braw, “Vision and Revision: Ranke and the Beginning of Modern History”, in *History of Theory*, 46, 2007, 45–60, who argues that the driving force in Ranke’s work was religious.

80 Hayden White, “Ranke: Historical Realism as Comedy”, in *Metahistory The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Baltimore, 1973, pp.163–90. See White, “Histories and novels are indistinguishable from another”, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, Baltimore, 1978, p.122.

81 “The opposition between myth and history is as problematical as it is untenable.” *Ibid.*, p.83.

interwoven.⁸² White based his chapter on Ranke totally on the two famous essays, “The Great Powers” and “The Political Dialogue”, which he took as the basis of Ranke’s theoretical position, without referring to Ranke’s great historical works, which rested on extensive research. He later abandoned this structuralist scheme but continued to insist on the purely literary and imaginative character of history.

Since White’s now famous *Metahistory* (1973) with the fitting subtitle *The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*, a large number of publications have appeared in Germany and the Anglo-American countries on the literary aspects of Ranke’s histories. In these publications a very different picture of Ranke emerges, with a focus on the aesthetic concerns of his writings. In a footnote we list the most important studies that go in this new direction.⁸³ None go as far as White. Of course Ranke himself stressed that history was both science and art, but he drew a clear line between the two. Nevertheless Ranke wrote for a broad audience: for scholars but even more so for an educated cultured public for whom his works presented scholarship in the form of great literature. It is no coincidence that Theodor Mommsen, a scholar in the nineteenth century German tradition, received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1902, the second time it was awarded. It is conceivable that Ranke, had he still been alive, might have been a serious candidate for the prize.

82 See White’s theory of emplotment in the introduction to *Metahistory The Historical Imagination*, pp.1–42.

83 Two books: Johannes Süssmann, *Geschichtsschreibung oder Roman? Zur Konstitutionslogik von Geschichtserzählung zwischen Schiller und Ranke 1780–1824*, Stuttgart, 2000; Philipp Müller, *Erkenntnis und Erzählung: Ästhetische Geschichtsschreibung in der Historiographie von Ranke, Burckhardt und Taine*, Köln, 2008. Among articles: Hermann van der Dunk, “Die historische Darstellung bei Ranke: Literatur und Wissenschaft”, in Wolfgang J. Mommsen, ed., *Leopold von Ranke und die moderne Geschichtswissenschaft*, Stuttgart, 1988; Wolfgang Hardtwig, “Historismus als ästhetische Geschichtsschreibung: Leopold von Ranke”, in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, vol. 23, 1997, pp.99–114

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Ranke's collected works were published in the 54 volumes of the *Sämmtliche Werke* (Leipzig, 1873–1890). This edition was begun by Ranke and completed after his death by his student, Alfred Dove. All of his major works except the *Weltgeschichte* (Universal History) and many of his important essays, including those that originally appeared in the *Historisch-Politische Zeitschrift*, are in that edition. Ranke, however, revised his earlier works for the collected edition, so that a student of his historical thought will also have to look at the original works. The final volume of the edition, LIII/LIV, edited posthumously by Alfred Dove, contains a large collection of letters, diary notes and three autobiographical sketches dictated by Ranke in his old age. The *Weltgeschichte* was published separately in nine volumes, Leipzig, 1881–1888. Part II of volume IX, edited by Alfred Dove, contains *On the Epochs of Modern History*, the previously unpublished lectures delivered by Ranke orally in 1854 before King Maximilian II of Bavaria. They have been republished by Theodor Schieder and Helmut Berding in a critical edition in 1971 (München, 1971), but there is considerable controversy – see the Introduction to this book – over whether this text reproduces Ranke's lectures faithfully. The *Deutsche Akademie* in the 1920s began the publication of a critical edition of Ranke's collected works. This edition was never completed; only the *German History in the Age of the Reformation*, ed. P. Joachimsen (München, 1925–1926), six vols, and *Twelve Books of Prussian History*, ed. G. Küntzel (München, 1930), three vols, appeared. There have been

several collections of Ranke's major works, including a 25-volume edition, *Historische Meisterwerke*, selected and edited by A. Meyer and H. Michael (Hamburg, 1928–1931) and a 12-volume edition, *Hauptwerke*, ed. W. Andreas (Wiesbaden, 1957). For a list of major individual works by Ranke and of English translations, see the end of this bibliographical note.

As we mentioned above, some of Ranke's correspondence was published in volume LIII/LIV of the *Sämmtliche Werke*. Additional letters are contained in Leopold von Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, ed. Walther Peter Fuchs (Hamburg, 1949) and *Neue Briefe*, ed. Bernhard Hoeft and Hans Herzfeld (Hamburg, 1949). An edition of Ranke's literary estate, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, was edited by Walther Peter Fuchs and Theodor Schieder. The first volume, *Tagebücher* (München, 1964), edited by Walther Peter Fuchs, consists of diary and notebook entries arranged by subject matter rather than chronologically. The second volume, already mentioned, contains the critical edition of *Über die Epochen der neueren Geschichte* (On the Epochs of Modern History); a third volume, *Frühe Schriften* (Early Writings), containing young Ranke's writings until 1824, has been edited by Walther Peter Fuchs (München, 1973); a fourth volume, *Vorlesungs-Einleitungen* (Introductions to Lectures) was edited by Volker Dotterweich and Walther Peter Fuchs (München, 1975). Ulrich Muhlack and Oliver Ramonat published the first volume 1813–1825 of Ranke's correspondence, *Gesamtausgabe des Briefwechsels von Leopold von Ranke* (München, 2007), but it was withdrawn after errors were discovered. A new edition is expected.

As yet there is no adequate biography of Ranke except for Leonard Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History* (see above), which focuses on Ranke the historian rather than the person. Ranke's autobiographical sketches mentioned above are fragmentary and at points unreliable. Three essays written by students of Ranke at the time of his death are very useful: Alfred Dove's biographical essay in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, XXVII (Leipzig, 1888), pp.242–69; Heinrich von Sybel's obituary speech, "Gedächtnisrede auf Leopold von Ranke" in *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. LVI (1886), pp.463–81, also in *Vorträge und Abhandlungen* (München, 1897), pp.290–307; and Wilhelm Giesebrecht's "Gedächtnisrede auf Leopold von Ranke" (München, 1887). Other contributions to his biography include Eugen Guglia, *Leopold von Rankes Leben und Werk* (Leipzig, 1893); H. F. Helmolt, *Leopold von Rankes Leben und Wirken* (Leipzig, 1921); Hermann Oncken, "Leopold von Ranke", in *Die großen Deutschen*, III (Berlin, 1936), pp.203–21; Carl Hinrichs, "Leopold von Ranke", *Die großen Deutschen*, 2nd edn (Berlin, 1956), pp.293–312; and a brief pamphlet published by the Historical Association, Hans Liebeschütz, *Ranke* (London, 1954). On Ranke's youth, Hermann Oncken, *Aus Rankes Frühzeit* (Gotha, 1922) and the above-cited Günter Johann Henz, *Leopold Ranke, Leben, Denken, Wert 1795–1824*, should be mentioned.

There are a large number of analyses of his work and thought in addition to chapters on Ranke in all major histories of historiography or German historiography, including Eduard Fueter, *Geschichte der neueren Historiographie* (München, 1912), pp.472–92; George P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the*

Nineteenth Century (London, 1913), chap. VI, “Ranke”, pp.72–97 and chap. VII, “Ranke’s Critics and Pupils”, pp.98–121; James Westfall Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing*, vol. II (New York, 1942), chap. XLI, “The University of Berlin: Niebuhr and Ranke”, pp.149–86 and chap. XLII, “The Ranke School”, pp.187–204; Heinrich Ritter von Srbik, *Geist und Geschichte vom Deutschen Humanismus bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. I (Salzburg, 1950), 239–92; Friedrich Engel-Janosi, *The Growth of German Historicism* (Baltimore, 1944), pp.51–62; Gerhard Schilfert, “Leopold von Ranke”, in *Die deutsche Geischichtswissenschaft vom Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zur Reichseinigung von oben*, ed. Joachim Streisand (Berlin, 1963), pp.241–70; and Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History* (Middletown, Conn., 1968), pp.63–89. In all three of his major works, *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat* (Cosmopolitanism and the National State), 1907; *Die Idee der Staatsräson* (Machiavellism: The Doctrine of raison d’état and its Place in Modern History), 1924, and especially *Die Entstehung des Historismus* (Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook), 1936, Meinecke deals extensively with Ranke. In the last mentioned book, he regards Ranke and Goethe as the two high points of historicist thought. A much more critical view of Ranke’s emphasis on political history and his optimism regarding power is contained in Meinecke’s famous lecture, “Ranke and Burckhardt”, held in East Berlin in 1948 and translated in Hans Kohn, ed., *German History. Some New German Views* (Boston, 1954), pp.142–56. The best analyses, certainly in English, of Ranke’s conception of history are Theodore H. Von Laue, *Leopold Ranke, the Formative Years* (Princeton, 1950) and Leonard Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History* (Chicago, 1977). Important works dealing with aspects of Ranke’s thought are Otto Diether, *Leopold von Ranke als Politiker* (Leipzig, 1911), one of the few German works critical of Ranke; Gerhard Masur, *Rankes Begriff der Weltgeschichte*, in *Historische Zeitschrift*, Beiheft 6 (1926); Ernst Simon, *Ranke und Hegel*, in *Historische Zeitschrift*, Beiheft 15 (1928); Ernst Schulin, *Die weltgeschichtliche Erfassung des Orients bei Hegel und Ranke* (Göttingen, 1958); Carl Hinrichs, *Ranke und die Geschichtstheologie der Goethezeit* (Göttingen, 1954); on Ranke’s political views, Wilhelm Mommsen, *Stein, Ranke, Bismarck* (München, 1954); on his conception of society, Rudolf Vierhaus, *Ranke und die soziale Welt* (Münster, 1957); on his conception of history, Leonard Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History*, 1977, mentioned above; also Wolfgang J. Mommsen, ed., *Leopold von Ranke und die moderne Geschichtswissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1988) and Georg G. Iggers and James M. Powell, eds., *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Discipline of History* (Syracuse, 1990). A very recent article is Berthold Seewald, ‘Ranke und die griechische Revolution’, in Patrick Merzinger *et al.*, eds., *Geschichte, Öffentlichkeit, Kommunikation. Festschrift für Bernd Sösemann zum 65. Geburtstag* (Stuttgart, 2010), pp.223–42. In Chinese, Yi Lan, *Research on the Rankean Historiography* (Shangai, 2005).

A chronological table of Ranke's main writings

- 1817 "Luther Fragment"
- 1824 *Histories of the Latin and Germanic Peoples in Criticism of Modern Historians. A Supplement*
- 1827 *Princes and Nations of Southern Europe*, vol. I
- 1829 *The Servian Revolution*
- 1832–36 Editor, *Historisch-Politische Zeitschrift*
- 1834 *Princes and Nations of Southern Europe*, vol. II *History of the Popes*, vol. I
- 1836 *Princes and Nations of Southern Europe*, vols. III and IV *History of the Popes*, vols. II and III
- 1837 *On the History of Italian Poetry*
- 1839–47 *German History in the Era of the Reformation*
- 1844 *On the Outbreak of the Seven Year War*
- 1846 *On the Assembly of the French Notables in 1787*
- 1847–48 *Nine Books of Prussian History*
- 1852–61 *History of France, Principally in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*
- 1859–66 *History of England, Principally in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*
- 1854 "On the Epochs of Modern History", lectures delivered before King Maximilian II of Bavaria
- 1867 *Collected Works*, vol. I
- 1868 *On German History, From the Religious Peace to the Thirty Year War*
- 1869 *History of Wallenstein*
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Part I

The Idealistic Theory of Historiography

Leopold von Ranke's formulation

Unlike Humboldt in “On the Historian’s Task”, Ranke did not publish his theoretical views regarding the character of history and of historical knowledge in a separate essay or work. The partial exceptions are the three essays on his conception of the state, which we have published in Part II of this volume, which deal with aspects of his views on history. He did, however, begin many of his lecture courses with general theoretical observations. In the winter semester of 1831–1832 he devoted an entire course to “The Study of History”. His remarks on the theory of history and of historical knowledge are buried in the extensive lecture notes he left behind. We are here presenting five excerpts from those notes. In all five selections Ranke defends the autonomy of history against the claims of the philosophy of history.

Philosophy, he explains in Selection 2 (“On the Relations of History and Philosophy”), proceeds through abstraction and history through the perception of the particular. The philosopher fails to grasp the concrete living reality of the individuals who compose history, which can never be “characterized through only one idea or one word” or “circumscribed by a concept”. In contrast, the historian is filled with “a feeling for and a joy in the particular in and by itself”. But while concentrating on the “original genius” that expresses itself in each individual, the historian keeps “his eyes open for the general”. He will not approach the particular with preconceived ideas as would the philosopher. Rather, the particular itself will reveal the general to him because the external manifestations of every individuality (e.g., a state) rest on a spiritual basis and possess a spiritual content. In contrast to the philosopher, the historian thus keeps to the facts. But in Selection 4 (“The Pitfalls of a Philosophy of History”), Ranke rejects a purely fact-oriented method that “concentrates mainly on externals”. “The particular,” he suggests in Selection 6 (“The Role of the Particular and the General in the Study of Universal History”), “is always related to a larger context”. Critical method and broad synthesis can and must go together in historical inquiry and writing. “Without a general view research would become sterile.”

The methodological implications of Ranke’s position are spelled out in greater detail in Selection 3 (“On the Character of Historical Science”). The historian can

2 The Theory and Practice of History

approach the general through the particular because he “recognizes something infinite in every existence: in every condition, in every being, something eternal, coming from God”, which constitutes “its vital principle”. Like Humboldt, Ranke believes that the historian must go beyond the external manifestations of historical phenomena to grasp the essential principle that reveals itself to his critical contemplation. “In the last analysis every unity is a spiritual one (*geistig*),” and because it is spiritual it is capable of “spiritual apperception”. The road to this apperception begins with the critical confrontation of historical reality as revealed in the available documents. But it does not end there. Ranke calls upon the historian to have a broad “universal interest” in all aspects of social and intellectual life, not merely in politics and war, as too many historians have had in the past. The historian must seek the causal nexus (*Zusammenhang*) between events, taking care however not to project an extraneous image onto the past. The observation of the events themselves will reveal their inner connectedness. Objectivity means impartiality; that is, it requires us to recognize the parties in any historical struggle in their own terms, to “understand them before we judge them”. In the final analysis the task of history is the same as that of philosophy, namely understanding the ultimate things. “If philosophy were what it ought to be, if history were perfectly clear and complete, then they would fully coincide with each other.” But history approaches the problem of the coherence of universal history by confronting reality, not, as in philosophy, by subordinating it to a scheme. Unlike philosophy, it recognizes that the solution to the riddle of world history is known only to God: we can only divine it and approach it from a distance.

The emphasis on the individual as an irreducible entity runs through Ranke’s discussion of the process of history in Selection 5 (“On Progress in History”). Here, as in the other selections, Ranke rejects a philosophy of history that sees the epochs of history as stepping stones in a great cosmic process. As we saw in the Introduction: “Every epoch,” he asserts, “is immediate to God, and its worth is not at all based on what derives from it, but rests in its own existence, in its own self.” This emphasis on the objective equality of all epochs appears in contrast to Ranke’s assertion in Selection 2 (“On the Relation of History and Philosophy”) and in the preface to the *Universal History* (Selection 14) that only certain ages and nations deserve the historian’s attention. Both in Selection 5 (“On Progress in History”) and in Selection 6 (“The Role of the Particular and the General”) Ranke seeks to reconcile the stress on individual spontaneity and freedom with a recognition of the role of necessity in history. Certain “leading ideas” or “great tendencies” give continuity and coherence to history. But these tendencies “can only be described”; they “cannot be subsumed under one concept”. Unlike Hegel, Ranke sees the meaning of history not in a unified process but rather in the multiplicity of developments in which mankind expresses itself.

None of the following selections was published during Ranke’s life time, hence the titles in the present edition are our own. Selections 2 and 6 (respectively, “On the Relations of History and Philosophy” and “The Role of the Particular and the General in the Study of Universal History”), were first published by Alfred Dove in the introduction to Part IX, Section II, of the *Weltgeschichte*, Leipzig, 1888.

Selection 5 (“On Progress in History”) is taken from the introductory lecture in the series of lectures that Ranke delivered in 1854 to King Maximilian II of Bavaria, entitled “On the Epochs of Modern History”. These lectures were posthumously reconstructed by Alfred Dove on the basis of stenographic notes and were published in Part IX, Section II, of the *Weltgeschichte*. Selections 3 and 4 (“On the Character of Historical Science” and “The Pitfalls of a Philosophy of History” respectively) were originally published by Eberhard Kessel in the *Historische Zeitschrift*, volume CLXXVIII (1954). A part of Selection 3 (“On the Character of Historical Science”) was first published by Erich Mulbe in his doctoral dissertation, “Selbstzeugnisse Rankes über seine historische Theorie und Methode im Zusammenhang der zeitgenössischen Geistesrichtungen”, Berlin, 1930.

The selections in the original 1973 edition were published with the permission of the *Historische Zeitschrift* and of Professor Kessel. Professor Walther Peter Fuchs, co-editor of Leopold von Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, graciously made available to us his own readings of these two manuscripts. We have compared Professor Fuchs’s readings with Professor Kessel’s versions and have indicated the divergences in the readings that are relevant to the English translation. Professor Lothar Gall, the current editor of the *Historische Zeitschrift*, generously permitted us to reprint the selections in the present version. We decided to insert an additional selection before the five selections listed above, namely an early letter by Ranke to his brother Heinrich in which he states the topics that interest him, the emergence of the modern European world, and expresses his religious faith, both of which will accompany him throughout his life.

All six selections have been translated by Wilma A. Iggers for this volume.

1 The Young Ranke's Vision of History and God

(Excerpts from a letter to his brother Heinrich from Frankfurt/Oder, end of March 1820)

Now the vacation is coming, I am looking forward to important work. I would like to learn something of the life of the nations in the fifteenth century, of the repeated opening up of all the sprouts which antiquity planted – as if now the old blossoms were gone, blown away, and the germ, long tended, was sprouting again. I know nothing about it yet. But I already know that this striving, forming, wanting did not remain with the literary nobility, but in a way was there with the common people. I know it from the Reformation. For although the Gospel was revealed originally to Luther by the grace of God, there are other reasons for the success of this message. Only dry wood goes up in flames immediately.

So I shall learn, I hope, or at least have an idea how the Empire and the Papacy died, and new life comes with a new breath and makes everything alive, just as certainly and generally as infected air poisons.

I think that Fichte already said that this love for a past life, namely its idea, this inner drive to learn about antiquity in its depth, leads to God. I have always had difficulty accepting what is said: “For he that takes communion and does not believe, eats and drinks to his damnation” (Compare I Corinthians, 11, 29). But is this not how it is? Those who take antiquity shallowly, superficially, indeed sinfully, contribute to their damnation: misery becomes ever deeper, life becomes shallower, and thinking becomes ever more rigid. As it happened back then in Italy, it now happens to so many. As if the immanent spirit were taking revenge because it is mocked.

In all of history God dwells, lives, can be recognized. Every deed gives testimony of Him, every moment preaches His name, but most of all, it seems to me, does so the connectedness of History (*Zusammenhang der großen Geschichte*). He stands there like a holy hieroglyph, understood and preserved in His most extreme manifestation (*in seinem Äußersten aufgefaßt und bewahrt*), perhaps in order that He is not lost to more perceptive future centuries.

Let us go on, let us go forward. No matter how it goes and succeeds, let us do our part to unveil this holy hieroglyph! In this way too we serve God, in this way we are also priests and teachers.

God be with you my brother.

(Translated by Wilma A. Iggers from *Ausgewählte Briefe* in SW, XLIII/XLIV, pp.89–90.)

2 On the Relations of History and Philosophy*

(A manuscript of the 1830s)

Often a certain conflict has been observed between an immature philosophy and history. By way of *a priori* thinking, conclusions were drawn about what must be. Without being aware that such ideas are exposed to many doubts, men went about trying to find these ideas again in the history of the world. Out of the infinite number of facts those were then chosen which seemed to confirm these ideas. This kind of historical writing has also been called philosophy of history.

One of the ideas with which philosophy again and again confronts history as an irrefutable claim is that mankind is on an uninterrupted road to progress, in a steady development toward perfection. Fichte, one of the foremost philosophers in this field, assumes five epochs, a world plan as he says – reason ruling through instinct, reason ruling through law, emancipation from the authority of reason, reason as science, and reason as art. If this or a similar scheme were to any extent true, then general history would have to follow the road of progress which the human race followed in the indicated direction from one age to the next. The sole subject matter of history would then be the development of such concepts as they appear and manifest themselves in the world of phenomena. But this is by no means the case. For one thing, the philosophers themselves have extraordinarily varied opinions about the nature and selection of these supposedly ruling ideas. But they very wisely focus only on a few peoples in world history while considering the lives of all the rest as nothing, as a mere supplement. Otherwise it could not be hidden for a moment that from the beginning to this day the peoples of the world have been in the most varied conditions.

There are two ways of acquiring knowledge about human affairs – through the perception of the particular and through abstraction. The one is the way of philosophy, the other that of history. There is no other way, and even revelation encompasses both abstract doctrines and history. These two sources of knowledge are therefore to be kept clearly distinguished. Nevertheless, equally mistaken are those historians who view all of history merely as an immense aggregate of facts to be committed to memory, meaning that particulars are strung to particulars and

* From Alfred Dove's Vorwort in *Weltgeschichte*, Theil IX, Abt. 2, pp.vii–xi, translated by Wilma A. Iggers.

all of these held together only by a common moral principle. I am of the opinion, rather, that historical science at its best is both called upon and able to rise in its own way from the investigation and contemplation of the particular to a general view of events and to the recognition of their objectively existing relatedness.

Two qualities are necessary to form a true historian. The first is a feeling for and a joy in the particular in and by itself. If he has a real fondness for the race of these manifold creatures of which we ourselves are a part – for this being which is always the same and yet forever different, which is so good and so evil, so noble and so beastly, so cultured and so coarse, so very much directed toward eternity and so subjected to the moment, so happy and so miserable, satisfied with little and full of desire for all – and if he has a fondness for the living phenomenon of man in general, then he will enjoy observing how man has always sought to live, regardless of the course of events. He will try to follow attentively the virtues which man has sought, the deficiencies which can be seen in him, his fortune and misfortune, the development of his nature under such diverse circumstances, and his institutions and mores. He will try to comprehend all – also the kings under whom the generations have lived, the sequence of events, and the development of major enterprises – without any purpose other than joy in individual life, as one takes joy in flowers without thinking to which of Linné's classes or of Oken's families they belong;¹ briefly put, without thinking how the whole appears in the particular.

This, however, is not all. It is necessary that the historian keep his eyes open for the general. He will not have preconceived ideas as does the philosopher, but rather while he observes the particular, the course which the development of the world in general has taken will be revealed to him. This development, however, does not relate to general concepts which may have predominated in this or that age, but to entirely different things. There is no people on earth which has remained without contact with others. In this relationship, which depends on its own peculiar character, a people enters world history, and it is this relationship which must be stressed in general history. Now some people on earth have had more power than others. They have exerted a preeminent influence on the rest. The transformations therefore which the world has experienced for good or for evil are likely to have come primarily from them. Consequently, we must direct our attention not to the concepts according to which some men appear as dominant forces but to the peoples themselves that have actively made their mark in history; to the influence they had on each other; to the struggles they waged with each other; to the way they developed in the midst of these peaceful or warlike relationships. For it would be infinitely wrong to seek in the struggles of historical powers only the work of brute force, and thus to grasp only the transitory in its external manifestation: no state has ever existed without a spiritual basis and a spiritual content. In power itself a spiritual essence manifests itself. An original

1 Carl von Linné (1707–1778), also known as Carolus Linnaeus, Swedish botanist; Lorenz Oken (1779–1851), German naturalist.

genius, which has its own life, fulfills conditions more or less peculiar to itself and creates a circle of effective activity for itself. It is the task of history to observe this life, which cannot be characterized through only one idea or one word. The spirit that manifests itself in the world cannot be circumscribed by a concept. Rather, its presence fills all the limits of its existence. Nothing is accidental in it. Its appearance has its foundation in everything.

3 On the Character of Historical Science*

(A manuscript of the 1830s)

History is distinguished from all other sciences in that it is also an art.

History is a science in collecting, finding, penetrating; it is an art because it recreates and portrays that which it has found and recognized. Other sciences are satisfied simply with recording what has been found; history requires the ability to recreate.

As a science, history is related to philosophy, as an art, to poetry. The difference is that, in keeping with their nature, philosophy and poetry move within the realm of the ideal while history has to rely on reality. If one assigned philosophy the task of penetrating the image which has appeared in time, it would be involved in discovering causality and conceptualizing the core of existence: and is philosophy of history not also history? If philosophy of history would assign to poetry the task of reproducing past life, then it would be history.

History is distinguished from poetry and philosophy not with regard to its capacity but by its given subject matter, which imposes conditions and is subject to empiricism. History brings both together in a third element peculiar only to itself. History is neither the one nor the other, but demands a union of the intellectual forces active in both philosophy and poetry under the condition that the last two be directed away from their concern with the ideal to the real.

There are peoples which do not have the ability to master this element. India had philosophy; she did not have history.

It is strange how, among the Greeks, history developed out of poetry and then emancipated itself from poetry. The Greeks had a theory of history which, while not equal by far to their practice, was nevertheless significant. Some stressed the scientific character more, others the artistic, but nobody denied the necessity of uniting the two. Their theory moves between both elements and cannot decide for

* "Idee der Universalhistorie", edited by Eberhard Kessel in *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. CLXXVIU (1954), 290–301; translated by Wilma A. Iggers and published with the permission of Professor Kessel and the *Historische Zeitschrift*. Compared with Professor Walther Peter Fuchs's unpublished reading of the manuscript.

either. Quintilian still said: "*Historia est proxima poetis et quodammodo carmen solutum.*"¹

In modern times one has, in cases of doubt, dealt only with the element of reality or has insisted on science as the sole principle. One has gone so far as to make history disappear as a part of philosophy. However, as has been said, history must be science and art at the same time. History is never the one without the other. But it is possible for the one or the other to be more pronounced. In lectures history can, of course, appear only as a science. For just this reason it is necessary that we undertake presently to deal with the idea of history.

Art rests on itself: its existence proves its validity. On the other hand, science must be totally worked out to its very concept and must be clear to its core.

Therefore, I would like to clarify the idea of world history in some preliminary lectures – by dealing in succession with the historical principle, the scope, and the unity of world history.²

I. Of the historical principle

They talk about what it is that justifies the historian's efforts in themselves. Not with regard to life. His effort is recognized as necessary, and it would be useless to speak about its utility since nobody doubts it. Society, the interrelatedness of things, demands it. But we must raise ourselves to a higher level. To justify our science against the claims of philosophy, we seek to relate to the sublime. We search for a principle from which history would receive a unique life of its own. To grasp this principle we shall consider history in its struggle with philosophy. We are speaking of that type of philosophy which has reached its results by way of speculation and which claims to dominate history.

But what are these claims? Fichte, among others, expressed them thus: "If the philosopher is to deduce the phenomena which are possible in experience from the unity of his presupposed concept, then it is clear that he needs no experience at all for his work. Remaining freely within the limits of philosophy without regard for any experience, he must be able *a priori* to describe all of time and all its possible epochs *a priori*." He demands of philosophy:³ a unified idea of all of life which is divided into various epochs, each of which is comprehensible abstractly or through the others, just as each of these special epochs is again a unified concept of a special age – which manifests itself in manifold phenomena.

It turns out that the philosopher, starting from a truth, which has been found elsewhere and in a way peculiar to him as a philosopher, constructs all of history for himself: how it must have taken place according to his concept of mankind.

1 *Institutio Oratoria* X. i. 31: "History is akin to the poets and is, so to speak, a prose poem." *Solutum* in this context means free of metrical restrictions.

2 The passage beginning "by dealing ..." is garbled in Kessel's reading and has been translated here from Fuchs's reading.

3 Fuchs's reading: He demands of the philosopher.

Not satisfied to test whether his idea is right or wrong, without deceiving himself, in terms of the course of events which have really occurred, he undertakes to subordinate the very events to his idea. Indeed, he recognizes the truth of history only insofar as it subordinates itself to his idea. This is a mere construct of history.

Were this procedure correct, history would lose all independence. It would be ruled simply by a proposition derived from pure philosophy and would stand and fall with the latter's truth. All that which is peculiarly interesting about history would disappear. Everything worthy of knowledge would seek only to know to what extent the philosophic principle can be demonstrated in history: to what extent the progress (*Fortgang*) of mankind, seen *a priori*, takes place. But it would be of no interest at all to delve into the events which have taken place or even to want to know how men lived and thought at a certain time. Only the totality of the concept which had once been alive⁴ in the observable history of man would be of interest. It would never be possible to reach certainty about the course of universal history through the study of history. The only possible variations would lie in splitting concepts, in deducing the lower from the higher. It suffices to say that history would become dependent, without an inherent interest of its own, and that the wellspring of its life would dry up. It would hardly be worthwhile to devote study to history since it would already be implicit in the philosophic concept.

These claims have in earlier times been raised by theology which, too, on the basis of what was unquestionably a misunderstanding, wanted to divide all of human history into a few periods based on sin, salvation, and millennium, or into the four monarchies prophesied by Daniel. It thus sought to capture the totality of phenomena in a few propositions contained in revelation – as theology understood revelation.

In either way, history would lose all scientific footing and character: it would be impossible to speak of a principle of its own from which history would derive its life.

But we notice that history remains in steady opposition to these claims. Indeed, even philosophy has never yet been able to exercise its rule. As far as printed works are concerned, I have not found that any philosophy has given even the slightest appearance of having taken control or succeeded in deducing the diversity of phenomena from a speculative concept; for the reality of fact eludes and escapes the concept of speculation in all respects.

Besides, we find that history has always opposed those claims with its full, undiminished strength. Hereby, it proves the unique character of principle inherent in history, opposed to that of philosophy.

Before giving expression to this principle, we ask first through what acts it manifests itself.

First of all, philosophy always reminds us of the claim of the supreme idea. History, on the other hand, reminds us of the conditions of existence. The former

4 Fuchs's reading: which had become alive.

lends weight to the universal interest, the latter to the particular interest. The former considers the development (*Fortgang*) essential and sees every particular only as a part of the whole. History turns sympathetically also to the particular. Philosophy is forever rejecting: it places the state of which it would approve into the remote future. By its nature philosophy is prophetic, forward-directed. History sees the good and the beneficent in that which exists. It tries to comprehend them and looks to the past.

Indeed, in this opposition one science directly attacks the other. While, as we have seen, philosophy is intent on subjecting history to itself, history at times makes similar claims. It does not want to consider the results of philosophy as absolute, but only as phenomena in time. It assumes that the most exact philosophy⁵ is contained in the history of philosophy, i.e., that the absolute truth recognizable to the human race is inherent in the theories which appear from time to time, no matter how much they contradict each other. History goes still one step further here; it assumes that philosophy, especially when it engages in definitions, is only the manifestation of national knowledge inherent in language. It thus denies philosophy any validity and comprehends it in its other manifestation.⁶ In this, even the philosophers side with the historians for, as a rule, they accept all former systems only as steps, only as relative phenomena, and ascribe absolute validity only to their own systems.

I do not mean to say that the historian is right in so viewing philosophy; I only want to show that in the historic view of things there is an active principle which is always opposed to the philosophic view and which constantly expresses itself. The question is what this principle is that lies at the basis of such expression.

While the philosopher, viewing history from his vantage point, seeks infinity merely in progression, development, and totality, history recognizes something infinite in every existence: in every condition, in every being, something eternal, coming from God; and this is its vital principle.

How could anything be without the divine basis of its existence?

Therefore, as we have said, history turns with sympathy to the individual;⁷ therefore it insists on the validity of the particular interest. It recognizes the beneficent, the existing, and opposes change which negates the existing. It recognizes even in error its share in truth. For this reason, it sees in the former rejected philosophies a part of eternal knowledge.

It is not necessary for us to prove at length that the eternal dwells in the individual. This is the religious foundation on which our efforts rest. We believe that there is nothing without God, and nothing lives except through God. By freeing ourselves from the claims of a certain narrow theology, we do nevertheless profess that all our efforts stem from a higher, religious source.

5 Fuchs's reading: It assumes that the true (*wahrhafte*) philosophy.

6 *begreift sie unter der anderen Erscheinung* – meaning not clear.

7 Fuchs inserts a phrase here: therefore it likes to attach itself to the conditions of appearance (*Erscheinung*).

The idea that even historical efforts are directed solely toward the search for that higher principle in phenomena must be rejected. History would thereby come too close to philosophy, since it would presuppose rather than contemplate the principle. History elevates, gives significance to, and hallows the phenomenal world, in and by itself, because of what it contains. It devotes its efforts to the concrete, not only to the abstract which might be contained therein.

Now that we have vindicated our supreme principle, we have to consider what demands result from it for historical practice.

1. The first demand is pure love of truth. By recognizing something sublime in the event, the condition, or the person we want to know about, we acquire a certain esteem for that which has transpired, passed, or appeared. The first purpose is to recognize this. If we wanted to preempt this recognition with our imagination, we would counter our very purpose and would investigate only the reflection of our subjective notions and theories. By this, however, we do not mean that one should simply remain attached to the appearance, to its when, where, or how. For then we would take hold of only something external, although our own principle directs us inward.

2. Therefore, a documentary, penetrating, profound study is necessary. First of all, this study must be devoted to the phenomenon itself, to its condition, its surrounding, chiefly for the reason that we would otherwise be incapable of knowing it; then, to its essence, its content, for as in the last analysis every unity is a spiritual one, it can only be grasped through spiritual apperception. This apperception rests on the agreement of the laws in accordance with which the observing mind proceeds with those which determine the emergence of the object under observation. Here, it is already possible to be more or less gifted. All genius rests on the congruence of the individual and the species. The productive principle which formed and created nature confronts itself in the individual who recognizes her and through him becomes clear to itself and attains self-understanding.

This gift is possible to a greater or lesser degree, but to a certain extent everybody has it. Intelligence, courage, and honesty in telling the truth are sufficient. Everyone may hope to find out, to penetrate, that to which he has devoted his efforts if in his studies he remains free of prejudice and retains his humility. But what is lack of prejudice? This question leads us to the third demand issuing from our principle.

3. A universal interest. There are those who are interested only in civic institutions, in constitutions, in scientific progress, in artistic creations, or only in political entanglements. Most of history⁸ thus far has dealt with war and peace. But since these aspects of society are never present separately but always together – indeed, determining each other – and since, for instance, the attitudes of science⁹ often influence foreign policy and especially domestic politics, equal interest must be devoted to all of these factors. Otherwise we would render ourselves

8 Fuchs's reading: Most histories.

9 *die wissenschaftlichen Richtungen* – meaning not quite clear in this context.

incapable of comprehending the one aspect without the other, and would work counter to the purpose of cognition. Herein lies the freedom from prejudice which we mean. It is not a lack of interest, but rather an interest in pure cognition undulled by preconceived notions. But how? Will this penetrating truth-searching effort not merely dissect the whole field into individual parts, will we not occupy ourselves merely with a series of fragments?

4. Penetration of the causal nexus. Basically, we should be satisfied with simple information – satisfied that it merely corresponds to the object. Our original demand would have been satisfied if there were only a sequence among the various events. But there is a connection among them. Events which are simultaneous touch and affect each other; what precedes determines what follows; there is an inner connection of cause and effect. Although this causal nexus is not designated by dates, it exists nevertheless. It exists, and because it exists we must try to recognize it. This kind of observation of history, which derives effects from causes, is called pragmatic; but we would like to understand it not in the usual manner, but according to our concepts.

Since the development of contemporary historiography, the pragmatic school of thought, as applied to actions, has introduced a system according to which selfishness and lust for power are the mainsprings of all affairs. What is usually required is to explain the observable actions of individuals as the result of passions which we derive deductively from our concept of man. The resulting point of view is tinged with an aridity, irreligiosity, and lack of sensitivity which drive us to despair. I do not deny that selfishness and lust for power can be very powerful motives and have had a great influence, but I deny that they are the only ones. First and foremost, we have to investigate the genuine information as precisely as possible to determine whether we can discover the real motives. Doing so will be possible more frequently than one might think. Only when this path leads us no further are we permitted to conjecture. Let no one believe that this limitation would restrict freedom of observation; no, the more documentary, the more exact, and the more fruitful the research is, the more freely can our art unfold, which only flourishes in the element of immediate, undeniable truth! Only invented motives are dry. The true ones, derived from fresh observation, are diverse and profound. Thus, like knowledge in general, even our pragmatism is documentary.¹⁰ It can even be very reticent and yet very essential. Where the events themselves speak, where the pure composition manifests the connection, it is not necessary to talk of this connection at length.

5. Impartiality. As a rule, two contending parties appear in world history. The struggles in which these parties are engaged, are, to be sure, very different, but closely related. We always see one develop out of the other.

Let no one believe that they will be so easily forgotten in the course of time. There is in man a happy trust in the judgment of history and of posterity which is appealed to a thousand times. But rarely is this judgment passed objectively.

10 Fuchs's reading: even our pragmatism is only (*nur*) documentary.

There is not alive within us¹¹ an interest similar to that of the past. We judge the past too often by the present situation. Perhaps this trait was never worse than at present, when a few interests which permeate all of world history occupy general opinion more than ever and split it into a great pro and con.

This may be the way of proceeding in politics, but it is not truly historical. We, who search for truth, even in error, who view every existence as permeated with original life, must above all avoid this error. Where there is any similar struggle, both parties must be viewed on their own ground, in their own environment, so to speak, in their own particular inner state. We must understand them before we judge them.

The objection will be raised that the writer, too, the one who describes, must have his opinion, his religion, from which he cannot separate himself.

This objection would be justified if we would presume to say who is right in every dispute. It is easily possible that, even in the midst of a dispute, we already know clearly which side we would support, in favor of which opinion we would decide. It is also possible that that impartiality which, in a conflict between two divergent opinions, often sees¹² the truth in the middle, becomes impossible for the historian since he is very definitely devoted to his opinion. But this is not all that matters. We can see the error, but where is there no error? This will not lead us to deny the realities of the existence. Next to the good we recognize evil, but this is an evil which is inherent in the situation.

It is not opinions which we examine. We are dealing with existence, which has often the most decisive influence in political and religious disputes. Here we rise to contemplate the essential character of the opposing, conflicting elements, and see how complex and entangled they are. It is not up to us to judge about error and truth as such. We merely observe one figure (*Gestalt*) arising side by side with another figure; life, side by side with life; effect, side by side with counter-effect. Our task is to penetrate them to the bottom of their existence and to portray them with complete objectivity.

At present two great parties are engaged in a struggle for which the words movement and resistance have become a watchword. History marks itself off from the party who desires eternal preservation as well as from the one who favors continual movement onward. Some consider preservation to be the legitimate principle. They find a legality in the preservation of a recognized *status quo*, of a definite law. They do not want to notice that what exists is derived from reform by struggles which destroyed what existed before. But then history would cease. It would somewhere reach its goal. There would be, so to speak, no illegal condition, none which reason could attack – an impossible conclusion. But history can just as little approve of the overthrow of the old, as if it were something completely dead and unusable, without regard to locality and particular interests. If history shuns violence in observation, how much more will it shun violence in execution.

11 Fuchs's reading reverses the meaning: There is also alive within us.

12 Fuchs's reading: often seeks.

This demolishing and changing and again demolishing is not the way of nature. It is a state of inner ruin which manifests itself in this way. It is an organism which has come into conflict with itself, certainly curious to observe but not pleasing. History, of course, recognizes the principle of movement, but as evolution and not as revolution. This is the very reason why it recognizes the principle of resistance. Only where movement and resistance balance each other without getting into these violent, all-devouring battles can mankind prosper. Only because history recognizes both can history be just toward both. It is not up to history even to pass judgment in theory on the struggle which the past teaches it. History knows very well that the struggle will be decided according to God's will.

6. Conception of the totality. Just as there exists the particular, the connection of the one to the other, so there finally exists totality. If it is a life, we grasp its appearance. We perceive the sequence by which one factor follows another. But that is not enough. There is also something total in each life; it becomes, it exerts an effect, it acquires influence, it passes away. This totality is as certain at each moment as every expression. We must devote all our attention to it. If we are dealing with a people, we are not interested only in the individual moments of its living expressions. Rather, from the totality of its development, its deeds, its institutions, and its literature, the idea speaks to us so that we simply cannot deny our attention. The farther we go, the harder it is, of course, to get at the idea – for here, too, we can accomplish something only through exact research, through step-by-step understanding,¹³ and through the study of documents. If this process proceeds through induction from the well-known, it is intuitive knowledge (*Divination*); if it proceeds from the little-known, it takes the form of abstract philosophic propositions. One sees how infinitely difficult things become with universal history. What an infinite amount of material! What diverse efforts! How difficult it is only to grasp the particular. Since, moreover, there is much that we do not know, how are we to understand the causal nexus everywhere, not to mention getting to the bottom of the essence of totality? I consider it impossible to solve this problem entirely. God alone knows world history. We recognize the contradictions – “the harmonies”, as an Indian poet says, “known to the Gods, but unknown to men”; we can only divine, only approach from a distance. But there exists clearly for us a unity, a progression, a development.

So by way of history we arrive at a definition of philosophy's task. If philosophy were what it ought to be, if history were perfectly clear and complete, then they would fully coincide with each other. Historical science would permeate its subject matter with the spirit of philosophy. If historical art would then succeed in giving life to this subject matter and in reproducing it with that part of poetic power which does not think up new things but mirrors in its true character that which has been grasped and comprehended, it would, as we said in the beginning, unite in its own peculiar manner science and art at the same time.

13 Kessel's reading: understanding (*Apprehendire*); Fuchs's reading: approximation (*Approximieren*).

II. Of the scope of world history

In three ways – with regard to 1) sequence, 2) simultaneity, and 3) individual developments.¹⁴

1. Sequence – In the abstract, history would embrace all of the life of mankind appearing in time. But too much of it is lost and unknown. The first period of its existence as well as the connecting links are lost without any hope of ever finding them again.

We can note what significance history has. If authors of another kind are lost, one misses the expression of one single individual. In a historical book, however, not only the existence and the view of an author are expressed; the historical book rather interests us because of the lives of others it contains. Much that was described has been lost; some has never been described. All this is threatened by death. Only those whom history remembers have not entirely died; their character and their existence continue to exist insofar as they remain in the consciousness of men. Only with the extinction of memory does actual death set in.

We are fortunate where documentary traces remain. At least these can be grasped. But what happens where there are none, for instance in prehistory? I am in favor of excluding this period from history because it contradicts the historical principle, which is documentary research.

One should exclude entirely that which usually is taken over in world history from geological deduction and from the results of natural history about the first creation of the world, the solar system, and the earth. By our method we find out nothing about these topics; it is permissible to confess our ignorance.

As for myths, I do not want to deny categorically that they contain perhaps an occasional historical element. But the most important thing is that they express the view of a people of itself, its attitude toward the world, etc. They are important insofar as the subjective character of a people or its thoughts may have been expressed in them, not because of any objective facts they may contain. In the former respect they possess a firm foundation and are very reliable for historical research, but not in the latter.

Finally, we can devote but scant attention to those peoples who still remain today in a kind of state of nature and who lead us to assume that they have been in this state from the beginning – that the prehistoric condition has been preserved in them. India and China claim an old age and have a lengthy chronology. But even the cleverest chronologists cannot understand it. Their antiquity is legendary, but their condition is rather a matter for natural history.

14 This is an incomplete sentence in the German original.

4 The Pitfalls of a Philosophy of History*

(Introduction to a lecture on universal history; a manuscript of the 1840s)

I do not want to say that it is necessary, but it is certainly useful for mutual understanding that a university lecturer, at the beginning of his course of lectures, indicate the point of view which he maintains or thinks he maintains in the realm of general ideas and that he define the position he occupies in the conflict of the leading opinions which move his scholarly discipline. Let us consider in particular the method, which not only determines the form of his lectures but has the greatest influence on the treatment of the subject matter.

So I, too, shall start out with a few remarks about the scientific conception of universal history and first of all shall mention methodological approaches with which I differ.

The old traditional method or theory concentrates mainly on externals. It seeks to establish time, place, sequence – in general, that which is factual about the phenomena of the past; it also seeks to penetrate to the earliest beginnings and to progress to the most recent, noting down everything, occasionally merely collecting and registering data. But this method encounters various difficulties. Traditions are uncertain, and the mass of facts are not easily followed; the overall impression is infinitely bleak. All one gets to see again and again is how the stronger conquers the weaker until he in turn is overcome and destroyed by a still stronger adversary; until force finally reaches our times, which will fare likewise. This is the view as it is expressed in Homer: the day will come when Troy will sink down; and the same will be repeated¹ on the ruins of Carthage. As Mohammed II expressed it in the moment when he conquered Constantinople: he feels that everything is vanity, that which he destroys as well as that which he founds; he remembers the spider that spins its web in the chambers of the Constantines.²

* “Einleitung zu einer Vorlesung über Universalhistorie,” edited by Eberhard Kessel in *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. CLXXVIU (1954), 304–7; translated by Wilma A. Iggers and published with the permission of Professor Kessel and the *Historische Zeitschrift*. Compared with the unpublished reading of the manuscript by Professor Walther Peter Fuchs.

¹ Fuchs’s reading: which Marius then repeats.

² This apparently refers to the palace of the Byzantine emperors, begun by Constantine the Great and abandoned after the sack of Constantinople in 1204. Regarding Mohammed II and the spider in the ruins of the imperial palace, see also *Weltgeschichte*, Theil IX, Abt. 1, 270.

Nothing remains but the feeling of the vanity of all things and a revulsion against the many kinds of misdeeds with which mankind has defiled itself. One does not see for what purpose all these things happen, why these men existed and lived; even the inner connection is distorted.³

Now a philosophy has arisen, not in the sense of the usual⁴ philosophy of the last century when only the pragmatic was considered to be philosophical, but a much freer philosophy of the type already attempted by Fichte, and then with greater vigor by Hegel. This view, which has been developed in more recent times, starts from the assertion that reason rules the world. The advocates of this position, however, immediately proceed to explain more precisely that the purpose of the spiritual world, which is the substantial world – therefore the final purpose of the world altogether – is the spirit's consciousness of its freedom, the reality of its freedom. They first list the abstract definitions of the nature of the spirit and then mention the means which spirit uses to realize its idea. In order not to make the mistake which Plato criticizes in Anaxagoras, who also claimed that reason rules the world but then dealt only with external causes, they proceed at once to prove their abstract principle by reference to the concrete. They establish the steps by which the development of the spirit accomplishes itself: immersion in the natural state, partial tearing away from the latter, and elevation into pure generality; or they set down how these categories, which are logical by their nature, are more precisely grasped in their application to the concrete. The world spirit follows its course through a necessary development by sacrificing the individuals. It uses, as Hegel says, a kind of cunning against the world historical individuals; it lets them carry out their own purposes with all the force of passion while it, the spirit, thereby produces itself. This is not the place to mention all the details of this method, but even for someone who does not agree with us it is undeniable that there is something extremely grandiose in this effort – indeed something gigantic, if we consider the energy which the originator of the system applies – and which therefore deserves great respect.

But it cannot be said that this conception is adequate for historical research. This theory is probably less the result of philosophical speculation than of reflection on the facts which were known anyway and which are being daily investigated more thoroughly. But at times the best documented results of critical historical research encounter the most passionate opposition.

But the main thing is that this view runs counter to the truth of individual consciousness. If this view were correct, the world spirit alone would be truly alive. It would be the sole actor; even the greatest men would be instruments⁵ in its hand and would carry out what they themselves neither understood nor wanted. History from this standpoint is actually the history of a developing God. As for myself, gentlemen, I believe in the one who was and is and will be, and in the

3 Kessel's reading: distorted (*verdreht*); Fuchs's reading: covered up (*verdeckt*).

4 Kessel's reading: common, usual (*gewohnten*); Fuchs's reading: predominant (*vorwaltete*).

5 Kessel's reading: would be an instrument; Fuchs's reading: would only be instruments.

essential immortal nature of individual man, in the living God and in the living man.

These two views constitute two opposing approaches which continually challenge each other. The inadequacy of the one calls forth the great exertion with which the other appears on the scene. Nevertheless, as often is the case with opposites, they are also related to each other. The enumeration of external conditions – men, numbers, facts – bears some similarity to the schematic organization imposed from without. Neither penetrates to the inner core of the magnificent substance (*Stoff*) of history.

The task is to a certain extent expressed in the two German words used to designate our discipline: *Geschichte* or *Historie*. *Geschichte* is merely the noun for “what happened” (*Geschehen*). “What happened” must coincide completely with science. Conversely, *ἱστορίᾱ* originally meant knowledge (*Wissen*) or cognition (*Erkenntnis*) – on, as Aristotle once said, but *διότι*: therefore the misuse of the word in “natural history” (*Naturgeschichte*), which is merely a translation. The word *Geschichte* expresses more the objective, *Historie* more the subjective, relationship. The former raises the subject matter (*Sache*) to a science. In the latter case the science admits the subject matter (*Gegenstand*) into itself. They coincide with each other, or rather the great task consists in having them coincide.

5 On Progress in History*

(From the first lecture to King Maximilian II of Bavaria, “On the Epochs of Modern History”, 1854)

I. How the concept “progress” is to be understood in history

If we were to assume, in common with many a philosopher, that all of mankind is developing from a given original state to a positive goal, we could conceive this process in two ways. Either a general guiding will promotes the development of the human race from one point to another or there is in mankind a vestige of spiritual nature which of necessity drives things toward a certain goal. I would not consider these two views to be either philosophically tenable or historically demonstrable.

We cannot consider these views philosophically acceptable because the former case goes so far as to do away with human freedom and makes men into tools without a will of their own; and because in the latter case men would have to be God or nothing at all.

But historically too, these views are not provable. For first of all, the greater part of mankind is still in its original state, at the very point of departure. And then the question arises: what is progress? Where is the progress of mankind noticeable? Elements of the great historical development have been incorporated in the Latin and Germanic peoples. Here, to be sure, a spiritual power exists which develops step by step. Indeed, the historical power of the human spirit in all of history is unmistakable, a movement started in primeval times which continues with a certain steadiness. There is, however, but one system of populations among mankind which takes part in this general historical movement, while others are excluded from it. But in general we can also view the nationalities engaged in the historical movement as not progressing steadily. For instance, if we turn our attention to Asia, we see that culture originated there and that the continent had several cultural epochs. But there the movement has on the whole been retrogressive; for the oldest epoch of Asian culture was the most flourishing; the second and third epochs, in which the Greek and Roman elements dominated, were no longer as significant, and with the invasion of the barbarians – the

* From “Über die Epochen der neueren Geschichte” in *Weltgeschichte*, Theil IX, Abt. 2, pp. 1–9; translated by Wilma A. Iggers.

Mongols – culture in Asia disappeared completely. In view of this fact the thesis of geographic progression has been offered. I must, however, from the start declare it an empty assertion to assume, as did for instance Peter the Great, that culture was making the rounds of the globe; that it had come from the East and was returning there again.

Secondly, another error is to be avoided here, namely, the assumption that the progressive development of the centuries encompasses at the same time all branches of human nature and skill. To stress only one example, history shows us that in modern times art flourished most in the fifteenth and in the first half of the sixteenth century, but in the seventeenth and in the first three quarters of the eighteenth century it declined the most. The same is true of poetry: there are also only brief periods when this art is really outstanding, but there is no evidence that it rises to a higher level in the course of the centuries.

If we thus exclude a geographic law of development and if we furthermore have to assume, as history teaches us, that peoples can perish among whom the development that has begun does not steadily encompass everything, we shall better recognize the real substance of the continuous movement of mankind. It is based on the fact that the great spiritual tendencies which govern mankind sometimes go separate ways and at other times are closely related. In these tendencies there is, however, always a certain particular direction which predominates and causes the others to recede. So, for example, in the second half of the sixteenth century the religious element predominated so much that the literary receded in the face of it. In the eighteenth century, on the other hand, the striving for utility gained so much ground that art and related activities had to yield before it.

Thus, in every epoch of mankind a certain great tendency manifests itself; and progress rests on the fact that a certain movement of the human spirit reveals itself in every epoch, which stresses sometimes the one and sometimes the other tendency, manifesting itself there in a characteristic fashion.

If in contradiction to the view expressed here, however, one were to assume that this progress consisted in the fact that the life of mankind reaches a higher potential in every epoch – that is, that every generation surpasses the previous one completely and that therefore the last epoch is always the preferred, the epochs preceding it being only stepping stones to ones that follow – this would be an injustice on the part of the deity. Such a generation which, as it were, had become a means would not have any significance for and in itself. It would only have meaning as a stepping stone for the following generation and would not have an immediate relation to the divine. But I assert: every epoch is immediate to God, and its worth is not at all based on what derives from it but rests in its own existence, in its own self. In this way the contemplation of history, that is to say of individual life in history, acquires its own particular attraction, since now every epoch must be seen as something valid in itself and appears highly worthy of consideration.

The historian thus has to pay particular attention first of all to how people in a certain period thought and lived. Then he will find that, apart from certain unchangeable eternal main ideas, for instance those of morality, every epoch has its

own particular tendency and its own ideal. But although every epoch has its justification and its worth in and by itself, one still must not overlook what came forth from it. The historian must therefore, secondly, perceive the difference between the individual epochs, in order to observe the inner necessity of the sequence. One cannot fail to recognize a certain progress here. But I would not want to say that this progress moves in a straight line, but more like a river which in its own way determines its course. If I may dare to make this remark, I picture the deity – since no time lies before it – as surveying all of historic mankind in its totality and finding it everywhere of equal value. There is, to be sure, something true in the idea of the education of mankind, but before God all generations of men appear endowed with equal rights, and this is how the historian must view matters.

Insofar as we can follow history, unconditional progress, a most definite upward movement, is to be assumed in the realm of material interests in which retrogression will hardly be possible unless there occurs an immense upheaval. In regard to morality, however, progress cannot be traced. Moral ideas can, to be sure, progress extensively; and so one can also assert in cultural (*geistige*) matters that, for example, the great works which art and literature have produced are enjoyed today by larger numbers than previously. But it would be ridiculous to want to be a greater writer of epics than Homer or a greater writer of tragedies than Sophocles.

II. What is to be thought of the so-called leading ideas in history

The philosophers, particularly the Hegelian school, have established certain ideas according to which the history of mankind spins itself out as a logical process in statement, counterstatement, and mediation, in positive and negative elements. However, in scholasticism life perishes; and thus also this view of history, this process of the spirit developing according to various logical categories, would lead back to that which we have already rejected above. According to this view only the idea would have an independent life, and all human beings would be mere shadows or phantoms inflated by this idea. The doctrine according to which the world spirit produces things, as it were, through deceit and uses human passions to achieve its goals is based on an utterly unworthy idea of God and mankind. Pursued to its logical conclusion consistently, this view can lead only to pantheism. Mankind is then God in the process of becoming, who gives birth to himself through a spiritual process that lies in his nature.

I can therefore understand by the “leading ideas” only the ruling tendencies in every century. These tendencies can only be described, but in the last analysis they cannot be subsumed under one concept. Otherwise we would again return to that which we have rejected above.

The historian must differentiate the great tendencies of the centuries and unroll the great history of mankind, which is just the complex of these various tendencies. From the standpoint of the divine idea, I cannot think of the matter differently but that mankind harbors within itself an infinite multiplicity of developments which manifest themselves gradually according to laws which are unknown to us and are more mysterious and greater than one thinks.

Dialogue

King Max: You spoke above of moral progress. Were you thinking here also of the inner progress of the individual?

Ranke: No, but only of the progress of the human race. The individual, in contrast, must always raise himself to a higher moral level.

King Max: But since mankind is composed of individuals, the question arises whether when the individual raises himself to a higher moral level this progress does not also encompass all of mankind.

Ranke: The individual dies. His existence is finite; that of mankind, on the other hand, is infinite. I accept progress in material matters because here one thing proceeds from the other. It is different in moral affairs. I believe that every generation is equal in moral greatness to every other generation and that there is no higher potential of moral greatness – we cannot, for example, surpass the moral greatness of the ancient world. It often happens in the spiritual world that intensive greatness stands in inverse relation to extensive greatness. We need only compare our present literature with classical literature to see this.

King Max: But should one not assume that Providence, without prejudice to the free self-determination of the individual, has set a certain goal for mankind toward which the latter is being led, even if not forcibly.

Ranke: This is a cosmo-political hypothesis which, however, cannot be proved historically. Indeed Holy Scripture contains a passage according to which some day there will be only one shepherd and one flock, but until now this has not shown itself to be the dominant course of world history. A proof of this is the history of Asia, which after periods of the greatest flowering fell back into barbarism.

King Max: But have not a greater number of individuals attained a higher degree of moral development in our time than before?

Ranke: I admit this, but not in principle; for history teaches us that many peoples are not capable of culture and that earlier epochs were often more moral than later ones. For example, France was much more moral and cultured in the middle of the seventeenth century than at the end of the eighteenth. As I said, a greater diffusion of moral ideas can be maintained, but only in certain areas. From a general human standpoint it would appear probable to me that the idea of mankind, which historically has been represented only in the great nations, will gradually embrace all of mankind, and this would then be inner moral progress. Historical science is not opposed to this view but provides no proof for it. We must especially guard against making this view into a principle of history. Our task is merely to keep to the facts.

6 The Role of the Particular and the General in the Study of Universal History*

(A manuscript of the 1860s)

History admittedly can never have the unity of a philosophical system; but history is not without inner connection. We see before us a series of events which follow and condition each other. To say condition does not, of course, denote absolute necessity. Rather, the important point is that human freedom is everywhere brought into play. Historical writing traces the scenes of freedom; this is the source of its greatest attraction. Freedom, however, is accompanied by force – that is to say, by original force. Without this force freedom would cease in the events of the world as well as in the realm of ideas. At any moment something new can begin again which can be traced back only to the first and common source of all human activity. Nothing exists entirely for the sake of the other. Nothing is absorbed entirely in the reality of the other. But still a deep inner relationship exists from which nobody is entirely free and which enters into everything. Freedom and necessity exist side by side. Necessity lies in that which has already been formed and cannot be overturned again, which is the basis of all newly emerging activity. What has developed in the past constitutes the connection with what is in the process of becoming. But even this connection is not to be assumed arbitrarily; it exists in a certain way and in no other. It, too, is an object of cognition. A longer series of successive and concurrent events, connected in this way with each other, forms a century, an epoch. The varied character of the epochs rests on the fact that different times and different circumstances result from the struggle of the conflicting principles of freedom and necessity. If, with this in mind, we visualize the sequence of the centuries, each with its own original character, all linked to one another, we have before us universal history from the beginning to the present day. Universal history encompasses the past life of the human race in its fullness and totality, not in its individual relationships and directions.

The science of universal history is distinguished from specialized research in this way: that universal history in investigating the particular remains always aware of the great whole on which it is working. The investigation of the particular,

* From Alfred Dove's Vorwort to *Weltgeschichte*, Theil IX, Abt. 2, pp. xiii–xvi; translated by Wilma A. Iggers.

even of a single point, is of value if it is done well. If devoted to things human, it will always reveal something worth knowing in itself. It is instructive even when applied to petty detail, for the human is always worth knowing. But the investigation of the particular is always related to a larger context. Local history is related to that of a country; a biography is related to a larger event in state and church, to an epoch of national or general history. But all these epochs themselves are, as we have said, again part of the great totality which we call universal history. The greater scope of its investigation has correspondingly greater value. The ultimate goal, yet unattained, will always remain the conception and composition of a history of mankind. Given the course which historical studies have taken in our time – and which they must continue to take if they are to portray thoroughly investigated and exactly known things – we are exposed to the danger of losing sight of the general knowledge everyone desires. For one does not study history only for school: the knowledge of the history of mankind ought to be the common property of mankind and, above all, should benefit the nation to which we belong and without which our studies would not even exist.

We need not fear to end up with the vague generalities with which an earlier age contented itself. The diligent and energetic studies which have been undertaken everywhere have been so productive and influential that such generalities can no longer be advanced today. We are also not likely to return to the systematic categories with which people occupied themselves at various times. A collection of historical notes with a superficial judgment about character and morality is just as unlikely to lead to thorough and satisfactory knowledge. In my opinion we must work in two directions: the investigation of the effective forces behind events and the perception of their general connection.

Comprehending the whole and yet doing justice to the requirements of research will, of course, always remain an ideal. It would presuppose an understanding on a firm foundation of the totality of human history. Even the investigation of the one or the other detail requires deep and extremely thorough study. Nowadays we are all agreed that criticism, objective conception, and a broad synthesis can and must go together. Relating the particular to the general cannot harm research. Without a general view, research would become sterile; without exact research, the general view would deteriorate into fantasy.

Part II

The Idealistic Theory of the State

The first two of the following essays first appeared in the *Historisch-Politische Zeitschrift*, which Ranke edited and largely wrote between 1832 and 1836; the third essay was the inaugural lecture Ranke delivered in Latin upon being raised to full professor status (*Ordinarius*) in 1836 at the University of Berlin. The essays are of particular interest because in them Ranke formulates his basic theoretical concepts regarding the nature of the state and of political power that underlie all his historical writings.

“The Great Powers” (Selection 7) contains an excellent illustration of what Ranke means by the “leading ideas” or “tendencies” in history and states succinctly the basic theme supporting all of his great works on modern history. For him, study reveals a legitimate order operating in history. The system of the balance of power is the instrument by which this order is maintained. Ranke examines the history of international relations from the age of Louis XIV to the post-Napoleonic Restoration, the recurring threats to the balance of power, and the forces within the system that led to the reestablishment of the legitimate order whenever it was temporarily threatened or disturbed. The play of power will continue indefinitely, Ranke suggests. A world government or the hegemony of one power over the rest would be disastrous for mankind: “A mixture of them all would destroy the essence of each one.” The future of the world rests in continued diversity, which requires the continuation of a balance of power in shaping the European world.

The historical approach of “The Great Powers” gives way to a more abstract analysis of the state in “A Dialogue on Politics” (Selection 8). Ranke stresses the individuality of states as the unique manifestations of spiritual forces, “thoughts of God”. Politics in the abstract has no meaning. Institutions can never be transplanted from one state to the other. “All states that count in the world and make themselves felt are motivated by special tendencies of their own.” It would be ridiculous to explain them as institutions existing for the economic benefit or the security of their citizens. Political power does not rest on a contract. But there is no real conflict between the power strivings of the states and ethics. For power, Ranke is convinced, rests on spiritual foundations. “But seriously,” he comments, “you will be able to name few significant wars for which it could not be proved that genuine moral energy achieved.”

In the inaugural lecture “On the Relation and Distinction between History and Politics” (Selection 9) Ranke presents his political views in a more concrete form. His position is very similar to that of Edmund Burke’s reflections on the French Revolution, although he does not mention Burke by name. He emphatically rejects the Enlightenment notion that all states should be ruled according to universal ethical standards and stresses again that every state has a unique character that excludes the application of such standards. He sees the error of the liberals of his day in their wishing to make a clean slate of the past which, as the French Revolution showed, resulted in chaos and the rule of the mob. Politics must be guided by an understanding of the past. Nevertheless, like Burke he believes that there is a place for reforms if these are built on institutions with historical roots.

“The Great Powers” was translated by Hildegard Hunt Von Laue from the edition of “Die großen Mächte” for the Insel-Bücherei, no. 200, prepared by Friedrich Meinecke. “A Dialogue on Politics” was translated by Theodore H. Von Laue from the text in Ranke’s *Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. XLIX/L, edited by Alfred Dove, 2nd edn, Leipzig, 1887. Both translations first appeared in Theodore H. Von Laue, *Leopold Ranke: The Formative Years*, Princeton, 1950. They are reproduced here with the permission of Princeton University Press. The Latin text of “On the Relation and Distinction between History and Politics” was translated into German by Ranke’s brother Ferdinand in *Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 24, pp. 280–93, and translated into English by Roger Wines in Leopold von Ranke, *The Secret of World History: Selected Writings on the Art and Science of History*, ed. Roger Wines, New York, 1981, and reproduced here with the permission of Fordham University Press.

7 The Great Powers*

(1833)

Introduction

It is much the same with studies and reading as with the observations of a journey or indeed with the happenings of life itself. However much the particular may attract and profit us while we are enjoying it, in time it will nevertheless retreat into the background, become obscured, and disappear. Only the general impressions which we receive in one place or another, the totality of perception which comes to us either unconsciously or through particularly careful observations, remain to increase the sum of our knowledge. The most intensely enjoyed moments of our existence are fused in our memory and make up its living content.

Certainly one does well, after reading an important work, to try to list in one's mind its separate conclusions and to glance back at the more important passages. It is also advisable sometimes to summarize a more comprehensive study. I shall go further, however, and urge the reader to visualize in their sequence the events of a long historical period (which can first be understood only by a variety of studies), the period, namely, of the last century and a half.

The contemplation of the individual moment in all its truth and of the special development for its own sake doubtless has inestimable value in history. The particular bears the general within itself. But no one can escape the urge to survey the whole from a detached viewpoint. Everyone strives after this in one way or another. Out of the variety of individual perceptions a vision of their unity involuntarily arises.

The only difficulty is to present such a view in a few pages, with proper justification and with some hope of winning approval. I shall nevertheless venture to do so.

For how else could I better introduce a new volume of this periodical* than by endeavoring to dispel several almost universal errors concerning the formation of

* Translated by Hildegard Hunt Von Laue from the edition in the *Inselbücherei*, no. 200, prepared by F. Meinecke. From Theodore H. Von Laue, *Leopold Ranke: The Formative Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), pp.181–218. Reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press and the translator.

* The second volume of the *Historisch-Politische Zeitschrift*. (Asterisked notes are by the translator.)

the present era, hoping to create a somewhat clearer and more certain perception of the present moment in world history?

If I dare attempt this, I must not reach too far back into the past. Otherwise it would be necessary to write a world history. I shall also deliberately limit myself to the great events, to the development of the external relationships of the different states. The key to the internal conditions, with which the external ones interact in a great variety of ways, will be for the most part contained therein.

The period of Louis XIV

Let our starting point be the fact that in the sixteenth century the freedom of Europe was seen to rest upon the opposition and balance between Spain and France. Those who were overpowered by the one would find refuge with the other. The fact that France was for a long time weakened and disorganized by civil war was considered a general misfortune. That Henry IV should have been so eagerly welcomed was not only because he put an end to the anarchy in France but principally because he thereby restored a stable European order.

It happened, however, that in the course of dealing dangerous blows to her rivals everywhere, in the Netherlands, in Italy, on the Iberian Peninsula, and of defeating Spain's allies in Germany, France herself obtained a preponderance of power greater than Spain had possessed even at her height.

Let the reader imagine the condition of Europe around the year 1680. France, so suited and so long accustomed to keeping Europe in a ferment, had a king who understood perfectly how to rule her. His nobles, finally subdued after long obstinacy, served him with equal zeal at court and in the army, and his clergy had allied themselves with him against the Pope. France was more unified and more powerful than ever before.

In order to obtain some measure of her power one need only recall that when the Emperor was establishing his first two standing regiments, infantry and cuirassiers, Louis XIV already had, in peacetime, 100,000 men in his garrisons and 14,000 men in the guards. While the English navy declined steadily in the last years of Charles II (it numbered 83 vessels in the year 1678), in 1681 the French navy reached a total of 96 ships of the line, first and second class, 42 frigates, 36 feluccas, and an equal number of fireships. Louis XIV's troops were the best drilled and most experienced to be found anywhere, and his ships were extremely well constructed. No other ruler had borders so well fortified for attack and defense alike. It was not only through military power, however, but also through diplomacy and alliances that the French had succeeded in overcoming the Spaniards. They expanded their new position into a kind of supremacy.

Let us first consider the North and the East. In 1674 Sweden undertook a dangerous war, without preparation, without money, without just cause, merely at a word from France and in the confidence of receiving French subsidies. The elevation of John Sobieski to the Polish throne was hailed in an official paper as a triumph for Louis XIV, and both the Polish king and queen acted in the French interest for a long time. Since it was no longer possible to do so by way of Vienna,

the discontented elements in Hungary were now supported through Poland. The French also put them in touch with the Turks, for France was continuing to exert her old influence upon the Porte by the usual means. Everything was part of the same system. One principal precaution of French diplomacy consisted in maintaining peace between Poland and Turkey; to this end they even approached the Tartar Khan. Another was to prevent Sweden from being invaded by the Russians. No sooner would the Russians give indication of attacking France's ally, Sweden, says Contarini in 1681, than the Turks would threaten to let loose their armies upon the land of the Tsar. But enough has been said. War and peace in these remote regions all depended upon France.

It is well known how this system directly affected Germany, principally through Sweden. But even without this our fatherland was already divided and weakened. Bavaria and the Palatinate were bound to the French court by marriage alliances, and almost all of the remaining rulers accepted subsidies at one time or another. By a formal treaty, which he concealed behind various feigned agreements, the Elector of Cologne delivered his fortress of Reuss over to French occupation.

Nor was it very different in central and southern Europe. At times the Swiss served in the French armies more than 20,000 strong. Under such strong open and even stronger secret influence their assemblies could no longer boast of much independence. In order to keep access to Italy Richelieu had seized Pinarolo. Still more important was Casale from which Milan and Genoa were directly threatened. Everyone perceived how dangerous it would be were this stronghold also to come into French hands. Yet despite the long duration of the negotiations which Louis XIV carried on with the Duke of Mantua, no one dared seriously to oppose him, and finally a French garrison moved in. The rest of the Italian rulers, like the Duke of Mantua, were for the most part at the beck and call of France. The Duchess of Savoy and, on the other side of the Pyrenees, the Queen of Portugal were Frenchwomen. The Cardinal d'Etrees exerted so unquestionable an influence over both of them that it was said that he despotically ruled them and thereby their countries.

Who would have thought it possible, however, that at the same time France could even secure a decided influence over her opponents of the House of Austria from whom she had just wrested her predominant position? She understood how to separate the Spanish and German lines in the House of Hapsburg. The young king of Spain married a French princess, and the activity of the French ambassadors was soon manifest even in the internal affairs of Spain. The most important man in that country at the time, Don John of Austria, was, so far as I have been able to ascertain, brought by the French into the disrepute in which he died. In Vienna also, even in the midst of war, they knew how to obtain a foothold, if only surreptitiously. At least it was only by such an assumption that the vacillations of the Austrian cabinet could be explained. As Montecuculi complained, the orders of the imperial war council were known in Versailles sooner than in their own headquarters.

In such a situation it was certainly England, above all other European nations, who would have had the mission and also the power to oppose the French. But it

is well known by what strange combination of politics and love, of luxury and religion, of personal interest and intrigue Charles II was bound to Louis XIV. Yet these ties were not sufficiently strong to suit the French king. At the same time he was taking pains to win over the most important members of Parliament. No matter how independent, how republican-minded they were, he still needed to employ but one method. "The reasons which I presented to him," says the French envoy, Barrillon, of one of these Englishmen, "did not convince him, but the money which I gave him, that secured him." In this way Louis XIV first drew England into his power. Had the English king resisted him, he would have encountered opposition in Parliament; and as soon as Parliament gave rein to the national antipathy toward the French, the king objected.

Louis XIV's policy, and Barrillon says explicitly that it lay close to his heart, was to keep England disunited and to prevent a reconciliation between king and Parliament. He succeeded all too well in this. England's power was completely neutralized.

In the face of France Europe was indeed divided and impotent, "without heart", as a Venetian remarked, "and without gall". One can imagine the condition of European politics if Louis XIV was suffered to set up the Chambers of Reunion at Metz at the suggestion of one of his legal councilors. He summoned mighty princes to these chambers in order that their rights to territories and populations, rights guaranteed by treaties of state, might be determined by his judges as though they were private rights. The German Empire must have been in a sorry plight that it should have allowed Strasburg to be torn from it so violently and unnaturally. Let me quote how a foreigner later described the conquest of Alsace. "When one reads its history," says Young in an account of his travels, "this does not make so deep an impression. Coming from France, however, I was impressed by the fact that I first had to cross high mountains and that I then descended to a plain (the one which had been conquered at that time), inhabited by a people who were completely different from the French in custom, speech, and descent."* Yet Germany put up with such an insult and concluded an armistice.

Where indeed was the limit to Louis XIV's presumption? I shall not dwell on how he abused Genoa nor how he had his ambassador enter Rome with an armed force in defiance of the Pope. Let us merely remember that he did not spare even his friends. He took possession of Zweibrücken although it belonged to his old ally, the king of Sweden. Although the Turks were his allies, his admiral bombarded Chios because Tripolitanian pirates had taken refuge there. He seized several forts belonging to the Hudson Bay Company during a period of the best understanding with England. He denied the aforementioned queen of Poland a trifling concession to her ambition. After he had made friends for himself, by money or by support, he delighted in neglecting them, perhaps to show that he did not need them after all, perhaps in the belief that only fear of his displeasure would keep them in line. He wished his predominance to be felt in every

* Ranke paraphrased rather than quoted literally a statement in Arthur Young's *Travels in France*.

negotiation. He himself said of one of his foreign ministers, "I had to remove him. Everything which he undertook lacked the grandeur and strength which one must show when carrying out the commands of a king of France who does not happen to be unfortunate."

One may even assume that this attitude was the principal motive behind his wars. He could hardly be called excessively greedy for land. There was really no question of widespread territorial conquest. Campaigns were merely part of the activities of the court. One assembles an army and has it parade before the ladies. Everything is prepared, the coup is successful, the king marches into the conquered city and then hurries back to the court. It was principally the triumphant splendor of the return, the admiration of the court, in which he delighted. He did not care for conquest and war so much as for the glory which they cast upon him. He did not seek universal and imperishable fame. He wanted only the homage of his entourage. To him they were both public and posterity.

But the state of Europe was no less imperiled. If there were to be a supreme authority, it should at least be a legally determined one. This arrogated supremacy, which was constantly disturbing the peace, threatened to destroy the foundations of European order and development. It is not always recognized that the European order of things differs from others that have appeared in the course of world history by virtue of its legal, even juridical nature. It is true that world agitations now and again destroy this system of law and order. But after they have subsided, it is reconstituted, and all exertions aim only at perfecting it once more.

Nor was this the only danger. A no less considerable one lay in the fact that under such decided domination by one nation, the others could hardly achieve an independent development, particularly not when this domination was supported by a preeminence in literature. Italian literature had already run its full course, English literature had not yet risen to general significance, and German literature did not exist at that time. French literature, light, brilliant, and animated, in strictly regulated yet charming form, intelligible to everyone and yet of an individual, national character, was commencing to dominate Europe. It may seem irrelevant to point out that the dictionary of the Academy, which set the standards for speech, abounds particularly in hunting and military expressions which were current at court. But it is undeniable that French literature completely corresponded to the state and helped the latter to attain its supremacy. Paris was the capital of Europe. She wielded a dominion as did no other city, over language, over custom, and particularly over the world of fashion and the ruling classes. Here was the center of the community of Europe. Yet it is remarkable that the French should already have boasted to all the world of their constitution, calling it "the happy condition of well-protected submission in which France finds herself, under a prince who, above all others, deserves to rule the world by his courage and wisdom and to bring true unity to it".

If one puts oneself back into the mind of a contemporary, what a dismal, oppressive prospect is presented. It might well have happened that the wrong course of the Stuarts would have prevailed and that English policy would have thenceforth been forever chained to that of France. After the Treaty of Nymwegen

the most strenuous efforts were made to have the choice of a Holy Roman Emperor fall upon Louis XIV himself or else upon the Dauphin. Important advocates were secured for this cause, "for the Most Christian King is alone capable of restoring its old splendor to the Empire". Nor was it wholly impossible that under favorable circumstances such a choice would have succeeded. And what if even the Spanish monarchy should fall to a prince of this house? If French literature had been cultivated in both the directions of which it was capable, the Protestant as well as the Catholic, then the French government and spirit would have subdued Europe with irresistible force. If one imagines oneself back in this period, as I have said, it would appear that nothing could check this unfortunate course of events.

But against such an increase in strength and in political predominance the lesser powers could band together. And they did indeed form alliances and associations. The concept of the European balance of power was developed in order that the union of many other states might resist the pretensions of the "exorbitant" court, as it was called. The forces of resistance gathered around Holland and William III. By a common exertion they warded off attack and waged war. One would have erred, however, in assuming that this afforded a permanent remedy. Despite the European alliance and a successful war, a Bourbon became King of Spain and the Indies. In the course of events the dominion of this House even spread over part of Italy.

In great danger one can safely trust in the guardian spirit (*Genius*) which always protects Europe from domination by any one-sided and violent tendency, which always meets pressure on the one side with resistance on the other, and, through a union of the whole which grows firmer from decade to decade, has happily preserved the freedom and separate existence of each state. As the supremacy of France rested upon the superiority of her military forces and upon her inner strength, so it could only be really challenged if other opposing powers either regained or attained inner unity, independent strength, and general importance. Let us review in a few swift strokes how this occurred.

England, Austria and Russia

England was the first to awake to a realization of her strength. We have seen how this was hitherto retarded, even prevented, by Louis XIV, who simultaneously manipulated Charles II and Parliament, using sometimes the one, sometimes the other, for his own purposes. With James II, however, Louis stood in much more intimate relationship. If nothing else, their religious convictions, their common devotion united them. The marked favor shown by James to Catholicism was gratifying to a ruler who himself was cruelly persecuting the Protestants. Louis poured forth his praise, and the English ambassador never tired of describing the cordiality with which the king offered every conceivable assistance when James took the decisive step and imprisoned the bishops. Just this action, however, turned the popular and even aristocratic forces (since the Church of England was assailed) against both their king and the French. The movement which overthrew the Stuarts was religious, national, and in the interest of

threatened Europe. It was led by the man who had hitherto been at the heart of all undertakings against France, William III. Thenceforth the new king and his parliament formed a single party. There could be quarrels between them, even violent ones, but in the long run and in the most important matters they remained united, the more so because the opposition which both encountered was so strong. The parties which had hitherto gone to extremes in order to make war upon one another from their opposing positions were forced into a constitutional framework where they disagreed with one another, it is true, but at the same time compromised, so that their conflict became a creative ferment in the constitution.

It is rather interesting to contrast this situation with that in France. The two countries indeed had much in common. In France, as in England, aristocratic families were in control and enjoyed exclusive privileges. They possessed these by virtue of their religion, the French through their Catholicism, the English through their Protestantism. But despite this there was a great difference between them. Uniformity, subordination, and dependence upon a highly developed but morally corrupt court life prevailed in France. In England there was a great struggle, a political competition, between two almost equally strong parties within definite, circumscribed limits. In France the piety which had been implanted largely by force degenerated all too soon into the very opposite. In England there developed a perhaps limited but on the whole manly and confident religion, which overcame its inner differences. The former country was bleeding to death from its false ambition. The veins of the latter were bursting with youthful vigor. It was as if the stream of English national strength were now for the first time emerging from the mountains, between which it had hitherto dug its deep and full but still narrow bed, and were flowing onto the plain to rule it in proud majesty, bear ships, and see world cities founded upon its shores.

The power of the purse, over which most of the previous quarrels between king and parliament had arisen, now commenced to unite them instead. During the quarter century of his rule Charles II had collected £43 million altogether. Within the space of 13 years William received £72 million; and these revenues increased tremendously thereafter. They increased for the very reason that they were voluntary, because the people perceived that they served, not the luxury of a few courtiers, but the common good. Under these conditions the predominance of the English navy did not long remain in doubt. In 1678 the flourishing condition of the royal fleet was indicated by the fact that it already numbered 83 warships, including fireships, with a complement of 18,323 men. Yet in contrast to this there were 184 ships in 1701, from first to sixth class, excluding fireships and smaller vessels, with a complement of 53,921 men. If the revenue from the postal system provides a means of measuring the internal traffic, then this must also have increased extraordinarily. The postal system is said to have yielded £12,000 revenue in 1660, and in contrast with this £90,504 in 1699.

It was already noticed that the real national motive behind the War of the Spanish Succession was the apprehension lest France and Spain should together snatch the West Indian trade back from the English and Dutch. Even if the peace

which was ultimately concluded deserved the censure which the Whigs so vehemently expressed, it at least allayed this fear. Nothing better indicates the predominance of the English over the Bourbon powers than the fact that they kept Gibraltar. They now obtained by treaty the best trade with the Spanish colonies, while at the same time their own colonies expanded with tremendous progress. As Batavia had paled before Calcutta, so did the old maritime luster of Holland give way to that of England, and Frederick the Great already found occasion to remark that Holland followed her neighbor as a dinghy its ship. And finally, the union with Hanover introduced a new continental and no less anti-French interest.

In the course of this historical development English literature first rose to an influential position in Europe and commenced to vie with the French. Science and philosophy, both schools of the latter,* produced a new and original view of the world, in which the world-dominating spirit was expressed and reflected. It would of course be claiming too much to say that the English had already created monuments of poetry and art that were perfect and imperishable in form, but they had magnificent geniuses even then and had long possessed at least one great poet, with whose works, comprehensible and effective in all ages, Europe was now for the first time becoming familiar. Whereas they had imitated French forms for a time, now one could perceive the influence of their philosophy and science upon the most distinguished Frenchmen.

In this manner Louis XIV was opposed by the rival whom he had hoped to overcome by diplomacy or the influence of religion, a more powerful, magnificent, and dangerous rival than one could ever have expected. The balance of sea power and the whole condition of western Europe were thereby radically changed.

In the meantime the East was also being transformed. I cannot share the opinion that Austria as we now know her can be called an old power. During the Middle Ages she would have amounted to little apart from the Empire. Afterwards she was both drawn along and overshadowed by the Spanish monarchy. At the end of the sixteenth century she lost all outward authority because of the religious schism and the hereditary privileges of the Estates of the Realm in her various provinces. At the beginning of the Thirty Years War German armies had to win back the Emperor's family possessions for him. Even the glory which Wallenstein's campaigns reflected upon Ferdinand II was only a passing one and provoked a powerful reaction. How often were the capitals of the Austrian provinces threatened by the Swedish armies in the latter part of the war. Yet at that very time the House of Austria succeeded in laying the permanent internal foundations of its power through the destruction of its enemies, the elevation of its satellites, and the final entrenchment of Catholicism. This was the first step towards the prestige which it has acquired in more recent times. But Austria first became an independent and important European power through the reconquest of Hungary. So long as Budapest was in the hands of the Turks, the French could threaten and gravely endanger Austria whenever they chose to exert their influence upon the Porte to

* Presumably Berkeley's idealism and Hume's skepticism.

this end. If they did not actually incite the expedition of Kara Mustapha in 1683, they at least knew about it. Their intention was not to ruin Germany or Christendom; they did not go that far. But they wanted to let the Turks take Vienna and even press on to the Rhine. Then Louis XIV would have appeared in the role of sole protector of Christendom. In the confusion which such an event would have produced, he could not have failed to gain control of the German crown and, if he wished, to take it for himself.

This plan was defeated outside the walls of Vienna. It was the last great effort of the Turks, which reacted the more disastrously upon them because they had thrown all their strength into it in a savage excess of effort. After that the disorderly Turkish hordes, which, according to an Italian, had advanced like "a strong, impenetrable wall", gave way everywhere before the German armies. In vain did a fetva of the Mufti declare Budapest to be the key to the Empire and its defense the duty of the Faithful. It was lost all the same. All of Hungary was reconquered and made into a hereditary kingdom. The discontented elements submitted. An orthodox Serbian population moved into the borderlands of lower Hungary to defend it in the future against the Turks. From then on Austria rested on a wholly different foundation. Formerly all wars in Hungary were waged by German armies, and it was said that all the rivers there were dyed with German blood. Now Hungary furnished the core of the Austrian armies in the German wars. It was no longer possible for French diplomacy to summon the Turks into the heart of the kingdom upon the slightest occasion. Only once more did France find support and help from the discontented elements. Finally all was quiet. The Emperor afterwards based his power particularly upon that very province which had hitherto been the greatest source of danger to him. It is obvious what a change must have been brought about in the condition of eastern Europe by the strengthening of this stable, rich, well-armed power, which held the Turks in check and even in awe.

Louis XIV experienced at least the beginning of another such change. The situation in Poland, which made it easy for him always to have a faction within that country, and the power of Sweden, which was at least theoretically bound to him by tradition and old alliance, readily gave him a decided predominance in the North. Charles XII made no change in this. It was one of his first resolutions, as expressed to his chancellor, "By all means to conclude the alliance with France and to be numbered among her friends." It is true that the War of the Spanish Succession and the Northern War, which commenced at almost the same time, were not connected by any previous arrangement, although this has often been suspected. But the success of the Swedish campaigns was useful to the French. The events of both wars had in fact a similar tendency. While the Spanish succession was to be the means of delivering southern Europe into the hands of the Bourbons, their old allies, the Swedes, were on the point of gaining complete supremacy in the North. After Charles XII had attacked and subdued the Danes, after he had conquered Poland and placed his own king there, after he had marched through half of Germany, which was not much better fortified in the East than in the West, and held Saxony for a long time, nothing more was

needed to consolidate his supremacy but to annihilate the Tsar, whom he had already defeated once. He set out to accomplish this with his army, which had been reconditioned in Saxony.

In the meantime the Tsar had made strenuous preparations. The decisive battle of 1709 took place. These two northern heroes faced each other once again, Charles XII and Peter I, original products of Germanic and Slavic nationality. It was a memorable contrast. The Teuton was high-minded and simple, blameless in his conduct, every inch a hero, true to his word, bold in his undertakings, reverent, stubborn to the point of obstinacy, and steadfast. The Slav was at once good-natured and cruel, highly agile, still half barbarian but drawn towards the studies and progress of the European nations with all the impetuosity of his alert, eager nature, full of great projects and indefatigable in carrying them out. It is a sublime spectacle to observe the struggle between these two natures. One could well wonder which was the greater of the two. But this much is certain: the greater future lay with the Tsar's success. While Charles showed little understanding for the true interests of his nation, Peter had taken upon himself the development of his, had personally prepared and commenced it, and had made it his chief aim.

He carried the day. To the report on the battle of Poltava which he sent to the capital he added a postscript, "With this, the cornerstone for St. Petersburg is laid." It was the foundation for the whole edifice of his state and his politics. From then on Russia began to give orders in the North. It would be an error to believe that this required a long development. Rather did it happen on the spot. How could Augustus II of Poland, who owed his restoration solely to the Russians' arms, have withdrawn from their influence? He was forced, moreover, to avail himself again of their help in his internal conflict, the struggle with his nobility. Peter I thereby became the direct arbiter in Poland, with power over both factions, all the more so because the Poles decreased their army to one quarter of its former size while his own became ever larger, better drilled, and more to be dreaded. In 1717 a Venetian remarked that the Tsar, who had formerly taken orders from the Poles, was now giving them at will and with unlimited authority. Henceforth the French influence in Poland necessarily decreased more and more. The French were no longer able to promote their candidate for the throne, even when they had the Polish nobility on their side.

In the meantime Sweden was weakened and reduced by these events. In the last days of his reign Louis XIV had guaranteed the Swedish throne all its possessions; nevertheless it eventually lost a considerable part of these. The French still maintained their influence in Stockholm, to be sure. In 1756 people complained there that Sweden was ruled from Paris, as a French province. But, as was said before, Sweden had become completely insignificant. There were the miserable conflicts between the Caps and the Hats, of which the French made use. But if they utilized these occasionally in order to provoke a war against Russia, this only reacted to their disadvantage; Russia was merely given opportunity for new conquest and expansion.

Thus the North had come under quite another rule than the indirect one of France; a great nation was commencing a new and truly European development.

In the East the French influence had not altogether disappeared, but it had nowhere near its old importance, even though Austria under Charles VI had certainly grown very weak. The sea was in the hands of France's rivals, who permitted or broke off at will the advantageous connection which France had established via Cadiz with Hispanic America.

On the other hand, through the natural agreement of the Bourbon courts, who after a short interruption had resumed their common policy, France kept the preponderance of power in southern Europe and also in Germany. Above all in Germany. There exist reflections on the state of European politics from the year 1736 which show us in concise and spirited fashion the situation, particularly of German affairs, shortly before the War of the Austrian Succession. Although their author admitted that the Emperor Charles VI endeavored to strengthen his power in the Empire and to make the constitution more monarchical, and that he even violated several articles of his Capitulation by his alliance with the Russians, who had already appeared at the Rhine, he found the danger not so great from this quarter. For he believed that the previous war had revealed the weakness of the Imperial court and that the arrogance and ruthlessness with which the Emperor sought to carry out his plans would defeat their purpose. Let us rather beware, he exclaimed, of those who by secret artifices, insinuating manners, and a feigned benevolence seek to lead us into slavery. He held that Cardinal Fleury, then prime minister of France, despite his air of extraordinary moderation, was deliberately pursuing under this very guise the schemes of a Richelieu or Mazarin. With his apparent magnanimity he was lulling his neighbors to sleep. His gentle and calm character served as a cloak for the diplomacy of his court. How shrewdly, without sensation or noise, had he won Lorraine for France! In order to gain the desired Rhine frontier, which was almost within his reach, he was only awaiting the confusion which would inevitably ensue upon the death of the Emperor.

In 1740 Charles VI died. Cardinal Fleury ventured upon even bolder measures than one had thought him capable of. He said frankly that he did not wish Maria Theresa's husband to be her father's successor, because the former was ill-disposed towards the French. It was primarily the Cardinal who secured the German crown for Charles VII of Bavaria. He conceived the plan of establishing within Germany four states of about equal power, limiting the House of Austria principally to Hungary, linking Bohemia on the other hand to Bavaria, Moravia and Upper Silesia to Saxony, and satisfying Prussia with Lower Silesia. How easily France could have maintained a perpetual domination over four such states, who by their very nature would never have agreed with one another.

Prussia

It was a moment of seeming danger to the German fatherland, which at that time possessed neither powerful states nor distinguished men of action nor a pronounced national feeling. It had no literature, no art, no culture of its own, nothing with which it could have opposed the predominating influence of its neighbors. Just then Frederick II appeared upon the scene and Prussia emerged as a power.

This is not the place to describe either the ruler or the state which he inherited and the state which he created. Nor may we lightly venture to show the innate power of the man and of the state and the many aspects of their character. Let us only attempt to make clear their position in the world.

We must concede that Frederick's first action was supported by the turn which French policy took immediately after the death of Charles VI. But the question was whether he should align himself much more closely with it. He was the very one who, as crown prince and still removed from real affairs of state, had set down those reflections of which I have just attempted to give some idea. They are, as one can see, directed squarely against French policy. He perceived as clearly as possible the danger which threatened Germany from this quarter. For this reason he had undertaken the war entirely on his own. He did not wish the success of his arms to be advantageous to the French.* He explained in great earnest to their ambassador that he was a German prince and that he would suffer their troops to remain on German soil no longer than was stipulated by the treaties. Late in 1741 it would not have appeared so impossible to reduce Austria completely. Bohemia and Upper Austria were almost as much in enemy hands as was Silesia. Vienna was as greatly threatened as was Prague. If these attacks had been strenuously continued, who can tell what might have been the outcome? I do not wish to credit it to magnanimity on Frederick's part that he eschewed this last step. He well knew that it would not have been to his advantage to rid France of her old opponent. When he saw the Queen of Hungary [Maria Theresa] on the brink of ruin, he wished to give her a chance to recover. He said so himself. But despite his full awareness of this he deliberately paused and concluded an armistice. His aim was to be dependent upon neither France nor Austria. He wished to feel free and to assume an independent position, based upon his own strength, between the two powers. In this simple purpose lies the key to his diplomacy during the Silesian Wars. Never was an acquisition maintained with more zealous vigilance than his. He distrusted his friends no less than his enemies. He kept himself always armed and ready for battle. As soon as he believed himself to be at a disadvantage or espied danger even in the distance, he took up arms. And as soon as he had gained the advantage or won a victory, he extended his hand in peace. Of course he could not bring himself to act on behalf of a foreign interest, but he also viewed his own interest without any exaggeration or self-deception. His demands were never exorbitant. They aimed only at the immediate advantage. But in this he would remain firm to the very last.

At the same time such unexpected new independence, won by a bold and defiant attitude, could not help but arouse the displeasure and animosity of his neighbors. One can understand why Maria Theresa did not immediately recover

* Notice here and in the subsequent analysis the features of Count Bernstorff's foreign policy. Prussia was to make moral conquests in Germany, appearing as the true defender of German greatness and security in Europe, even in the eighteenth century. For that reason Ranke stressed the German mission of Frederick the Great, not altogether for the benefit of historical accuracy.

from the loss of a rich province and why she viewed with uneasiness the rise of so successful and able a rival in the Empire. The prestige of Prussia also deeply affected the northern system. Prussia's conclusion of a quite harmless treaty with Sweden and France, in order to maintain a balance of power in the North, aroused the wholehearted hatred of several Russian ministers, who believed their supremacy in the North to be threatened. Frederick might all the more easily have found support in France. But the fact that he, unlike Sweden, was not to be dominated but presumed to follow a free, independent policy, provoked also the indignation of the court at Versailles. Although this court perceived very well what was at stake, it decided nevertheless to change its whole system of alliances and to ally itself henceforth with Austria. Public opinion, in one of those sudden outbursts which are so characteristic, especially in France, joyfully acclaimed the treaty. Thus the Empress succeeded in uniting both great continental powers with herself. Lesser powers, her neighbors in Saxony and Pomerania, joined with them. An alliance was at work, not very different from that which was formed against Austria after the death of Charles VI, even stronger, in fact, because of the participation of Russia. As one had talked formerly about a partition of Austria, so now of Prussia, and it was only across the sea that Frederick found an ally, the same one who had previously joined with Austria. But since he possessed only very moderate power despite this new help, and was insignificant in the face of the alliance, how should he be able or even dare to enter into conflict?

He had, as we know, sought from the Viennese court a categorical declaration as to their armaments. "If it proves even moderately satisfactory," he said to one of his ministers, "then we shall not march." At last the expected courier arrived. The answer was by no means adequate. "The die is cast," he said. "Tomorrow we march!" Thus he plunged courageously into the danger. He had sought it out. He had almost provoked it himself. But only when he was in the midst of it did he recognize its full extent. If ever an event depended upon a great personality, it was the Seven Years War. The wars of our time are usually brought to an end by a few decisive blows. Formerly they lasted longer. Yet men fought more for limited demands and claims than for their very existence or for that of the state itself. The Seven Years War differed in that throughout its long duration the existence of Prussia was at stake every moment. In that state of affairs, amidst the general hostility, only one calamitous day would have been enough to bring about Prussia's ruin. Frederick himself was completely aware of this. After the defeat at Kollin he exclaimed, "It is our Poltava!" And if this prediction was fortunately not fulfilled, it is still true that thenceforth he felt himself threatened with disaster at every moment. I shall not discuss the sources of help upon which he drew in so desperate a situation, his military genius, the bravery of his troops, the loyalty of his subjects, and accidental circumstances. The main thing is that he kept up his spirit.

French philosophy had guided him only in light intellectual exercises, superficial poetry, and academic problems. It appeared to have prepared him for the enjoyment of life while this lasted, rather than for such mighty exertions. But true genius remains unharmed even by false teachings. It is a law unto itself. It rests

upon its own truth, of which it needs only to become conscious. Life and the exertion of a great undertaking take care of this. Misfortune ripens it.

Frederick II had long been a great general, but his hardships made him a hero. The resistance which he offered was not only military but at the same time an inner, moral, and spiritual one. The king waged the war with constant reflection upon the ultimate foundation of all things, with a lofty perception of the transitoriness of earthly existence.

I do not wish to praise his poems as distinguished works of poetic talent. As such they may have many defects. But those which originated during the changing fortunes of the war have an exalted sweep of simple thought. They disclose to us the agitation of a manly soul in distress, conflict, and danger. He saw himself "in the midst of a raging sea. Lightning flashes through the tempest. The thunder," he said, "bursts over my head. I am surrounded by cliffs. The hearts of the helmsmen are benumbed. The source of our fortune has dried up. The palms have vanished. The laurel has withered."

Occasionally he may have sought support and strength in the sermons of Bourdaloue. More often he turned to the philosophy of the ancients. Yet the third book of Lucretius, which he had studied so often, told him only that evil was necessary and that there was no remedy for it. He was a man to whom exalted thoughts emerged from this hard, despairing doctrine. He looked death, which he had so often wished to find on the battlefield, straight in the eye, without flinching, even when it took another form.* Just as he often liked to compare his enemies to the triumvirate, so he called upon the manes of Cato and Brutus and was resolved to follow their example. Yet he was not in quite the same position as these Romans. They were involved in a general world destiny – Rome was the world – with no other consideration than the importance of their own persons and of the idea for which they were fighting. But he had a country to represent and to defend. If any one special thought operated upon him, it was this thought of his country, of his fatherland.

Let us imagine him after the battle of Kunersdorf, as he fathomed the extent of his misfortune and the hopelessness of his situation. In the face of his enemies' hatred and good fortune, he thought all was lost. He saw but one single expedient for his army and his country and resolved to seize this, to sacrifice himself. But then there gradually appeared the possibility of renewed resistance, and he dedicated himself anew to his all but hopeless duty. It was impossible for him to leave his country in the state in which he had so long been forced to see it, "inundated by its enemies, robbed of its honor, with no source of help, in mortal danger". "To you," he said, "I will devote the remainder of my calamitous life. I will not be consumed by fruitless anxiety. I will throw myself once more into the field of danger." "Let us oppose fate," he exclaimed to his troops, "courageous against so many enemies, who conspire with one another and are drunk with pride and presumption." Thus he persevered. Finally he witnessed the day of peace.

* He contemplated suicide.

"Firmness is the only thing, in affairs of state," he said at the end of his history of this war, "which can save one from danger." He kept his land intact, and, from the moment that he knew he was again master of it, he made it his primary, even sole concern to heal the wounds which the war had brought to it.

If one could establish as a definition of a great power that it must be able to maintain itself against all others, even when they are united, then Frederick had raised Prussia to that position. For the first time since the days of the Saxon emperors and Henry the Lion a self-sufficient power was found in northern Germany, needing no alliance, dependent only upon itself.

It followed that from then on France was able to exert little or no influence on German affairs. The time for an opposition such as she had aroused or favored during the War of the Austrian Succession was now completely past. As Prussia had emancipated herself, so had Bavaria and Saxony allied themselves again to Austria.

And for the time being a renewal of the old relationship was unthinkable. France herself had prevented it by entering into that close alliance with Austria which had produced the Seven Years War. I shall not examine to what extent this alliance caused all the other effects which the French, not without exaggeration, ascribed to it. But it is certain that France herself thereby gave up her previous position, through which she had encouraged the German opposition, and that "from this moment on", as was said in France, "the King of Prussia, to the detriment of French supremacy on the continent, became the protector of German freedom". It is unlikely that Austria would have permitted France to exert her old influence. While he was still co-regent and from the very beginning, Joseph II proclaimed that he considered the rights of the Imperial crown to be sacred. He insisted that no one interfere with him on this point who wished to be in good standing with him. It was already recognized that the true safeguard of Germany's political independence lay in a free and solidly established union of both German powers against the outside world.*

This great change became fully significant through the fact that at the same time German literature was emancipated from French models and their false imitation. I do not mean that our nation had not hitherto enjoyed intellectual independence to a certain extent. It was found mainly in the development of theological systems, which had taken hold of all minds and were essentially of German origin. But these still represented only a part of the nation, and the pure, ideal, intuitive recognition of true religion found itself forced into a strange, scholastic form. One cannot deny the activity and partial success with which work was carried on in many other branches of learning, but they all had to submit to the same form. They were taught in complicated systems suited to delivery from

* Here again Ranke read the policy of his masters at the Prussian Foreign Office into German history in the second half of the eighteenth century. He ignored the rivalry between Austria and Prussia and its disastrous consequences for Germany in the period of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars.

a lecturer's desk but seldom to real intellectual comprehension. The universities controlled education in general, not without narrowness and compulsion. It was all the more natural that this system of education should gradually lose its hold on the upper classes, who, as was said before, let themselves be carried away by French influences.

But after the middle of the eighteenth century a new development of the national spirit began. We must not forget that it developed largely from the old system of education, although it stood in a certain contradiction to it. Dissatisfied, still influenced but no longer so limited by the dogmatic system, the German spirit achieved a fuller expression of this system through poetry.

Religion was at last brought close to people's hearts once more, with all its human implications and, most important of all, without emotionalism. With a bold effort philosophy rallied to a new discussion of the ultimate foundation of all knowledge. Side by side appeared the two tendencies of German philosophy, essentially different yet closely related, the one more intuitive, the other more analytical. They have since developed next to and with one another, have attracted and repelled each other, but only in conjunction have been able to express the fullness of an original consciousness. Criticism and archeology broke through the mass of formal learning and pressed on to a grasp of living forces.

The national spirit, awakened with a start and benefiting from its own thoroughness and maturity, then developed a poetic literature, independently and with free experimentation. It thereby created a view of the world that was comprehensive, new, and, although caught in many contradictions, still more or less coherent. This literature had the inestimable quality of no longer being limited to only part of the nation. Instead it embraced the whole and made it really aware of its unity for the first time.

If new generations of great poets do not always succeed the old ones, one should not wonder too much. The great attempts are made and are successful. What one had to say has been well said, and sincere minds scorn to travel along frequented and easy roads. But the work of German genius was by no means completed. Its task was to penetrate into positive science. Many obstacles stood in the way, arising from its own development and from other influences as well. We can now hope that it will overcome them all, will become more harmonized within itself, and will then be capable of continuous new creation.

But I shall pause here since I wished to discuss politics, although all these things are very closely connected and a true political philosophy can only be inspired by a great national existence. This much is certain, that no other phenomenon contributed so much to the self-confidence with which this wave of enthusiasm was accompanied as did the life and renown of Frederick II. A nation must feel independent in order to develop freely, and never has a literature flourished save when a climax of history prepared the way for it. But it was strange that Frederick himself neither knew nor anticipated this. He labored for the emancipation of the nation, and German literature worked with him, yet he did not recognize his allies. They knew him well, however. It made the Germans proud and bold to have had a hero emerge from their midst.

As we have seen, it was a necessity of the seventeenth century that France be checked. This had now occurred in a manner that exceeded all expectation. It cannot really be said that an artificial, complex political system had been formed to this end. It merely appeared so, but the fact was that great powers had raised themselves by their own strength and that new independent national states in all their original power had taken over the world stage.

Austria, a Catholic and German nation, was in a stable military condition, full of fresh, inexhaustible vitality, rich, and, in short, a world by itself. The Greco-Slavic principle appeared more strongly in Russia than ever before in world history. The European forms which it adopted were far from crushing this original element. They penetrated it instead, animated it, and for the first time drew forth its own strength. In England the Germanic maritime interests had developed into a colossal world power which ruled all the seas and before which all memories of earlier sea powers paled. And in Prussia the German Protestants found the support which they had long sought, at once their representation and their expression. "Even if one knew the secret," says a poet, "who would have the courage to tell it?" I shall not presume to put the character of these states into words. But we can see clearly that they were founded upon principles which had grown out of the various great developments of earlier centuries, that they were formed according to these original differences and with varying constitutions, and that they represented those historic demands which in the nature of things were made upon successive generations. In their rise and development, which, understandably enough, could not have occurred without a many-sided transformation of inner conditions, lies the principal event of the hundred years which preceded the outbreak of the French Revolution.

The French Revolution

However significant the rise of the continental powers was in itself, it cannot be denied that France was thereby restricted and that she was right in viewing the success of the other countries as her own loss. She had always vigorously opposed them. How often had she formerly tried to check the advance of Austria into Hungary and against the Turks. How often did the best Austrian regiments have to be called back from the Danube where they were opposing the Turks and sent to the Rhine against the French. Russia had wrested her influence in the north from the French. When the cabinet at Versailles became aware what position Prussia had assumed and was seeking to maintain in the world, it forgot its American interests in order not only to reduce but actually to annihilate this power. How often had the French undertaken to restore the old relationship with England, to favor the Jacobites and perhaps to foment a Stuart rebellion. In return they made enemies of the English every time, whether they stood with Prussia against Austria or with Austria against Prussia. They waged their wars upon the continent and neglected their navy. During the Seven Years War they lost America, as the elder Pitt said, in Germany.

Thus France stood nowhere near so definitely at the center of the European world as a hundred years earlier. She was forced to witness the partition of Poland without being consulted. In 1772, to her deep resentment, she had to permit an English frigate to appear at the roadstead of Toulon in order to supervise the stipulated disarmament of her fleet. Even the smaller independent states, such as Portugal and Switzerland, had admitted other outside influences.

At the same time it must be remarked that the harm was not so great as has often been represented. France still exerted her old influence over Turkey. Through the Family Compact she had linked Spain to her policy. The Spanish fleet and the riches of the Spanish colonies stood at her disposal. The remaining Bourbon courts, among which Turin may almost be included, allied themselves with France. And the French faction finally won out in Sweden. But this was not nearly enough for a nation who gloried more than any other in the splendor of a universal superiority. She was aware only of the loss of claims which she regarded as rights. She noticed only what the others had conquered, not what she had kept. She eyed with indignation such powerful, well-established rivals, for whom she was no longer a match.

Much has been said about the causes of the Revolution and they have also been sought where they can never be found. One of the most important, in my opinion, is this change in the international position of France which had brought the government into deep discredit. It is true that the government knew neither how to manage the state correctly nor how to wage war properly. It had allowed the most dangerous abuses to prevail, and the collapse of its European prestige originated in large measure from this. But the French also blamed their government for everything that was really only a product of the changed world situation. They still fed on memories of the days of the all-powerful Louis XIV. All the conditions that resulted from the rise of other vigorous states, who curtailed France's former influence, were attributed by the French to the incapacity of their foreign policy and to the indeed undeniable degeneration of their internal situation. Thus it came about that the reform movement in France, which turned all too soon into a revolutionary one, was also directed from the very beginning against the outside world.

The American Revolution at once revealed this two-fold nature. If one did not already know, one could see from the memoirs of Ségur what a strange mixture of zest for war and pseudo-philosophy motivated the youth of the higher French nobility who participated in it. "Freedom," says Ségur, "presented herself to us with all the attraction of glory. While the more mature used the opportunity to put their principles into practice and to check arbitrary power, we younger ones marched only under the banners of philosophy in order to wage war, to distinguish ourselves, to win places of honor. We were philosophers out of chivalrous conviction." But gradually these youths became philosophers in real earnest. A strange combination! While they attacked England and made it their ambition to weaken her and strip her of her colonies, yet it was the independence of an English peer, the dignified position of a member of the House of Commons, which they particularly wished to achieve.

The American Revolution now became a turning-point, not so much through a change in the general balance of power as through its indirect effects. For although the English colonies had been torn loose from the mother country, it was soon apparent that England was in so well-established a position that she did not feel their loss very keenly. And although the French navy had regained a certain prestige, England had still been victorious in the decisive battles and had maintained supremacy over her combined rivals.

By indirect effects I refer not only to the rise of republican tendencies. There was also a more immediate result. Turgot had opposed the war with great energy. Only in time of peace could he hope to restore by thrifty economy the finances, which were already then suffering from a deficit, and at the same time to put through the necessary reforms. But he had to yield to the tide of youthful enthusiasm.

War was declared and waged at an extravagant cost. Necker knew how to raise new loans with all the banker's talent which he possessed to so high a degree. The more these accumulated, however, the higher the deficit rose. In 1780 Vergennes already declared to the King that the condition of the finances was truly alarming, that it made peace necessary, and without delay. In the meantime the war dragged on, and only after its conclusion did the confusion become generally apparent. Here again is a striking contrast. England came out of the American war no less exhausted and laden with debts, but Pitt seized the evil by the roots and restored confidence through strict measures. The French finances, on the other hand, passed from weak into ever weaker hands, more untried and at the same time more daring, so that matters grew worse from month to month and not only deprived the government of authority but threatened its very form.

One can imagine how strongly this affected foreign policy.

The French no longer had any choice; war must be avoided at all costs. Despite their bad financial situation, they preferred to buy off the demands which Austria exacted of Holland by a sum of money of which they contributed half. Had it depended only on France, the Emperor would have had a free hand to carry out his designs upon Bavaria. Closely as the French government had allied itself with the so-called Dutch patriots, it still had to let the latter be invaded and conquered by Prussia. In my opinion it cannot even be greatly blamed for this. What could it have done in that July of 1787 to prevent the Prussian ultimatum to Holland from being carried out? At that very time the *parlements* were refusing to register the new imposts without which the state could not be administered, and soon thereafter, in that famous session of August 15, the *Grand'Chambre* opened its doors and declared to the assembled crowd that in future the king could levy no new taxes without first summoning the Estates General.* At a moment when their entire internal order was in question, the French could scarcely exert any influence

* Ranke's dating is incorrect. The famous session of the *Grand'Chambre* of the *Parlement* of Paris took place on August 7 1787. On August 15 the whole body found itself escorted to Troyes into banishment, by authority of *lettres de cachet*.

upon the outside world. Yet it was a very significant juncture, for just then both imperial courts decided to attack Turkey. The French were in no position to give aid to their old ally, and, if Turkey were not to perish, she had to seek help from England and Prussia.

At all events we can see that French foreign policy was suffering from an insignificance and futility neither commensurate with the natural claims of that country nor corresponding to the interests of Europe as a whole. If this weakness of policy stemmed from the internal confusion, as cannot be denied, then the latter in turn was immensely aggravated thereby. The policy of the Archbishop of Brienne was under the most violent and general censure. He was accused of cowardice and even of disloyalty because he had not supported Holland and had missed this opportunity of restoring the military prestige of the French on land. People considered French honor to be so debased that it could only be purified by streams of blood.

However exaggerated that last statement may sound, one cannot find fault with the sentiment which lay behind the dissatisfaction. The national consciousness of a great people demands a fitting position in the European community. International relations depend not on convenience but on actual power, and the prestige of a state will always correspond to the strength of its internal development. Any nation will feel sensitive not to find itself in its rightful position. How much more so the French nation which had so often raised the singular claim of being preeminently the great nation!

I shall not go into the multiplicity of causes which led to the fearful development of the French Revolution. I shall only remind the reader that the decline in France's external position was an important factor. One need think only of the role played by an Austrian princess, the unhappy queen upon whom fell all the hatred which this nation had so long felt for the House of Austria, and of the unfortunate scenes occasioned by the false rumor of a secret Austrian committee. The French not only realized that they had lost their old influence upon their neighbors. They even persuaded themselves that the foreign powers were exerting a strong secret influence upon their own state. They imagined that they could detect it in all the measures of their domestic administration. This was the very thing that fanned the general indignation and increased the ferment and fury of the populace. If we adhere to the theory of the importance of foreign relations, we can form the following interpretation of the Revolution.

The resources of all nations had been concentrated in unprecedented fashion in order to attain greater power. To this end many obstacles in their internal condition had to be removed and old privileges were often violated. This had been accomplished in the different countries with varying degrees of planning and success. It would make an illuminating study if someone could describe how it was attempted everywhere, to what extent it succeeded, and to what it led. Finally the same task was undertaken in France. The absolute power of previous French kings has been much condemned, but the truth is, while it did indeed appear in occasional arbitrary acts, on the whole it had greatly declined. When the government made the attempt to modernize itself, it was already too weak to carry

it through. It also did so with unsteady hands. It could not combat the opposition of the privileged orders. It appealed to the Third Estate for help, and thus to the power of the democratic ideas which had already begun to capture public opinion. Now it obtained an ally that was far too strong for it. The government wavered as soon as it recognized the strength of the Third Estate, departed from the course which it had chosen, returned to the ranks of those whom it had wished to attack, and offended the very group upon which it had called for help. It thereby aroused all the political passions of the people, came into conflict with the convictions and tendency of the century, indeed with its own tendency, and provoked a movement in which the Third Estate, or rather the revolutionary element which had developed within and around it, took a gigantic step forward, overthrowing not only the privileged classes and the aristocracy, but the king and throne themselves and destroying the entire old regime.

The same policy had strengthened and consolidated the government of some although not of all states. But in France, because of the course which it took and because of its consequences, it led to disaster.

Yet if people sometimes assumed that the power and prestige of France must utterly perish in this great debacle, they were mistaken. So strong were the tendencies towards restoration of her power in Europe that they not only survived the fearful upheaval but were even asserted as never before, far beyond the power of other states. Whereas elsewhere the intermediary orders would have merely been limited in their independence and forced into greater participation in the common effort, here they were completely annihilated. Nobility and clergy were stripped not only of their privileges but, in the course of events, even of their possessions. It was a wholesale confiscation on the vastest scale. The ideas which Europe had hailed as salutary and liberating to mankind were suddenly transformed before its eyes into the horror of devastation. The volcanic fire, from which one had expected a nourishing, life-giving warmth for the earth, had poured forth a fearful eruption.

Yet even in the midst of this wreckage the French never abandoned the principle of unity. During the confusion of the revolutionary years France proved much more powerful than before in relation to the other European states. One can justly say that this tremendous explosion of all forces extended beyond France's borders. Between the old and the new France there existed the same contrast as between the aristocracy who had controlled the old state – spirited, to be sure, and brave by nature, but accustomed to court life, motivated often by petty ambition, effete and voluptuous – and the wild, violent Jacobins, intoxicated with a few ideas and stained with blood, who ruled the new one. In the course of events the other states had developed an aristocracy not exactly like the French one but still similar to it. Thus it was no wonder that by fiercely straining all forces the Jacobins gained the preponderance of power in Europe. The first victory, won by a coincidence of unexpected circumstances, was all that was needed to awaken the revolutionary enthusiasm which thereupon gripped the French nation and became its life principle for a long time.

It cannot be said, however, that France thus became actually stronger than the other great powers together or even than her nearest neighbors if they remained

united. We are sufficiently familiar with the errors of policy and of military strategy which produced so unfavorable a result for these countries. And they could not wean themselves all at once from their previous jealousy. Even the one-sided coalition of 1799 was able to liberate Italy and to assume a very powerful military position, until an unfortunate dissension divided it. But it cannot be denied that the French state, formed in the midst of a struggle with Europe and designed to cope with it, became stronger than any one of the continental states through the new centralization of power.

Although France had always appeared to be seeking freedom, she had advanced through successive revolutions towards a military despotism which far exceeded the development of military systems elsewhere, great as these were. The successful general crowned himself emperor. He had the power to throw all available resources of the nation into the field at any moment. In this way France returned to her old supremacy. She succeeded in excluding England from the Continent, in robbing Austria of her oldest provinces in Germany and Italy during repeated wars, in overthrowing the army and the monarchy of Frederick II, in forcing even Russia into obedience, and finally in penetrating the latter's inner provinces as far as the old capital. The French emperor needed war with only these powers in order to establish direct dominion over both southern and central Europe, not excluding a large part of Germany. Thus everything which had happened in Louis XIV's time had now been far exceeded. The old liberties of Europe were submerged. Europe seemed about to be swallowed up by France. The universal monarchy, which had hitherto seemed only a remote danger, was almost realized.

Restoration

But were the energetic forces which had emerged as the great powers to be choked and destroyed at one blow?

"War," says Heraclitus, "is the father of things." Out of the clash of opposing forces, in the crucial moments of danger – collapse, resurgence, liberation – the most decisive new developments are born.

France had only attained her supremacy because, in the midst of her turbulence, she had known how to keep the feeling of national unity more alive than ever and how to strain her national resources in an extraordinary expansion for the single purpose of the war.

If anyone wished to oppose her or conceived a hope of once more breaking her predominance, the means which had previously sufficed were no longer enough. Even an improved military organization would not have helped by itself. A more thorough revival was needed in order to concentrate all available resources. It had become necessary to awaken to self-conscious activity those slumbering spirits of the nations by whom life had hitherto been carried on more unconsciously.

It would be a splendid enterprise to investigate this rejuvenation of the national spirit in the whole compass of European peoples and states, to note the events which aroused it once more, the signs which heralded its first awakening, the multiplicity of movements and institutions in which it victoriously culminated.

This would be such a far-reaching undertaking, however, that we cannot even touch upon it here.

It is certain that men for the first time began to fight with some prospect of success when, in 1809, they commenced to fulfill satisfactorily these demands of world destiny; when in well-ordered empires whole sections of the inhabitants lost their hereditary dwellings to which they were tied even by religion and abandoned them to the flames; when whole populations, accustomed for generations to peaceful civilian life, took up arms, man for man; when people finally forgot their hereditary feuds and united themselves in earnest. Then for the first time, and no sooner, did they succeed in defeating the enemy, restoring the old liberties, and restraining France within her borders, driving the flooded stream back into its bed.

If the main event of the hundred years before the French Revolution was the rise of the great powers in defense of European independence, so the main event of the period since then is the fact that nationalities were rejuvenated, revived, and developed anew. They became a part of the state, for it was realized that without them the state could not exist.

It is almost generally held that our times tend towards and are capable only of dissolution. Their only significance lies in the fact that they are putting an end to the unifying or shackling institutions left over from the Middle Ages. They are striding towards this goal with the certainty of an innate impulse. It is the end-product of all great events and discoveries, of our entire civilization, in fact. It also explains the irresistible inclination towards democratic ideas and institutions, which of necessity produces all the great changes which we are witnessing. It is a general movement, in which France merely preceded the other countries.

All this is an opinion which can of course lead only to the gloomiest prospects for the future. We believe, however, that it cannot be supported against the truth of the facts. Far from being satisfied only with negation, our century has produced the most positive results. It has achieved a great liberation, not wholly in the sense of dissolution but rather in a creative, unifying sense. It is not enough to say that it called the great powers into being. It has also renewed the fundamental principle of all states, that is, religion and law, and given new life to the principle of each individual state. In just this fact lies the characteristic feature of our time.

In most epochs of world history it has been religious ties that have held the peoples together. Yet occasionally there have been other periods, which can be better compared with ours, when several larger kingdoms and free states existed side by side, linked by one political system. I shall only mention the period of the Hellenistic kingdoms after Alexander. It provides many similarities to our own, a highly developed common culture, military science, and action and interaction of complicated foreign relations, also the great importance of the trading interests and of finance, rivalry of industries, and a flowering of the exact sciences based on mathematics. But those states, produced by the enterprise of a conqueror and the dissension among his successors, had neither possessed nor been able to attain any individual principles of existence. They were based upon soldiers and money

alone. It was for that very reason that they were so soon dissolved and at last entirely disappeared. It has often been asked how Rome could overcome them so quickly and completely. It happened because Rome, at least as long as she had enemies of importance, held to her principle of existence with admirable firmness.

With us it also appeared as if only the extent of our possessions, the power of the troops, the amount of wealth, and a certain share in the general civilization were of value to the state. If there were ever events qualified to dispel such an illusion, it is those of our own time. They have finally made the public aware how important moral strength and the sense of nationality are for the state. What would have become of our states if they had not received new life from the national principle upon which they were based? It is inconceivable that any state could exist without it.

World history does not present such a chaotic tumult, warring, and planless succession of states and peoples as appear at first sight. Nor is the often dubious advancement of civilization its only significance. There are forces and indeed spiritual, life-giving, creative forces, nay life itself, and there are moral energies, whose development we see. They cannot be defined or put in abstract terms, but one can behold them and observe them. One can develop a sympathy for their existence. They unfold, capture the world, appear in manifold expressions, dispute with and check and overpower one another. In their interaction and succession, in their life, in their decline or rejuvenation, which then encompasses an ever greater fullness, higher importance, and wider extent, lies the secret of world history.

*As we are now attacked by a spiritual power, so must we oppose it with spiritual force. The dominion which another nation threatens to gain over us can only be combated by developing our own sense of nationality. I do not mean an invented, illusionary nationality but the real, existing one which is expressed in the state.

But, so people will reply, is not the world developing at this moment into an ever closer community? Would not this tendency be impeded and limited by the contrast between different peoples with their national ways or different states with their individual principles?

Unless I delude myself, there is a close analogy with literature. No one spoke of a world literature at the time that French literature dominated Europe. Only since then has this idea been conceived, expressed, and propagated; in other words, only after most of the principal peoples of Europe had developed their own literature independently and often in sharp contrast. If I may be allowed to make a trivial comparison, I should like to remind the reader that the sort of company where one person is spokesman and leads the whole conversation affords neither pleasure nor profit, nor does the sort where all the people, being on the same level or, if you will, of the same mediocrity, only say the same thing. One only feels happy when many-sided personalities, freely developed, meet on a higher common ground or indeed produce this very meeting-place by stimulating and

* The subsequent conclusion was omitted by Ranke in his edition of collected works.

complementing one another. There would be only a disagreeable monotony if the different literatures should let their individual characters be blended and melted together. No, the union of all must rest upon the independence of each single one. Then they can stimulate one another in lively fashion and forever, without one dominating or injuring the others.

It is the same with states and nations. Decided, positive prevalence of one would bring ruin to the others. A mixture of them all would destroy the essence of each one. Out of separation and independent development will emerge the true harmony.

8 A Dialogue on Politics*

(1836)

- Friedrich:* What, visiting me in such splendor, in the uniform of a Councillor-of-State, with even your foreign decorations?
- Carl:* I wager, you did not even hear the carriages rumble by. But if you would come only two steps with me, I could show you the bright windows where I have been. They shine along the entire street.
- Fr:* And from all that brilliance you stole away into the solitude of this study?
- C:* To offer a “Good Evening” to my Benedictine brother. Having seen the great world, I am looking for a human soul. After light conversation one wants at last to enjoy a serious talk.
- Fr:* I should feel flattered by your distinctions. Be all the more welcome.
- C:* Do you really believe that mingling among all these dignitaries could satisfy me – adding to the manifold opinions and bits of news that dominate the drawing room the flavor of my own?
- Fr:* You talk like most men of the world from Byron on; you feel fatigued and uninspired.
- C:* The great world and its conversation only allows communication in generalities. One stays on the surface of things. One meets people whom chance or birth have raised to high society; one hears of the things in the spotlight – of current interest. It is a community of the most ephemeral kind, constantly changing, and still the same, year after year. There are people who find satisfaction in it. To me this motley monotony is somewhat depressing.
- Fr:* Still, you would not want to forego it entirely. The interests which set the wheels of the world really in motion must be revealed in high society, if only hastily and, as you say, superficially. It must be

* Translated by Theodore H. Von Laue from the text in Ranke’s *Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. XLIX/L, edited by Alfred Dove, 2nd edn, 1887 from Theodore H. Von Laue, *Leopold Ranke: The Formative Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), pp.152–80. Reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press and the translator.

The numbered notes are the present editors’; the asterisked notes are the translator’s.

interesting for all of you in the great world to see them come to the surface, grow, dominate, and again disappear.

What did they chiefly talk about tonight?

C: Good Lord, they repeated the news as they interpret it: Tension between England and Russia, the *Portfolio*,¹ the restitution of Silistria, the journey of the French princes, Alibaud, the small attention given nowadays to the sessions of the *Chambre*, railroads and percussion rifles, war and peace – in a word, everything you want.

Fr: But some viewpoints, some opinions must have stood out. ...

C: Depending on various official positions. The eyes of the young officers gleamed at the mere mention of war, without much thought whom they would fight. They seize upon the animosities of the *Portfolio*, they believe that England seriously desires to force a rupture, they do not doubt the fire would immediately spread over the rest of Europe and the world.

Fr: Indeed, what army would not wholeheartedly wish for war ... action, prestige, advancement – I don't blame them.

C: But it is strange: armaments were never mightier and more universal than now, and yet we have never had a longer peace.

Fr: That follows quite naturally. Previously wars were waged with the excess of forces, with the people who could be spared, with money either found in the treasury or at least raised elsewhere without too great an effort. Now the nations, armed as they are, fight almost man for man, with all their might. The expenses of the initial equipment alone are nearly unbearable. One must be prepared for a struggle for life or death. No wonder then that statesmen are somewhat reluctant. But you were going to mention still another opinion.

C: The civil service, on the other hand, is pleased by the prospects of a long peace. They are losing their fear of the contrast between absolute and constitutional monarchy which beclouded the future these many years and seemed so dangerous. The "juste milieu", kept under so long, recovers its breath. They hope that everybody will become convinced that government by extremes is impossible.

Fr: You, too, it seems, are siding with this opinion.

C: How could I do otherwise? Should we surrender political life to the incessant agitation of the popular party, or to the retarding tendencies

1 *The Portfolio, or Collection of State Papers, etc., Illustrative of the History of Our Times*, ed., David Urquhart, 6 vols (London, 1836–7), a collection of secret Russian state papers, particularly dispatches by the diplomat Pozzo di Borge, in Russian service, dealing with the Eastern question, published by the violently anti-Russian English diplomat David Urquhart in order to drive a wedge between Austria and Russia. These papers, deposited in Warsaw, had fallen into unfriendly hands during the Polish uprising of 1831.

of the aristocratic party? Should we not take a position between them in their conflict, if only to escape subservience to them? We do not want to be swept away by their force from what we want into what we do not want.

Fr: Very wise.

C: And very necessary. Where is a state that does not face the necessity of choosing this compromise? We should have expected that after the recent French Revolution the party of movement and liberalism would have won an irresistible supremacy. But after a few days the new government was forced to call a stop to the revolution. And it is obvious what repercussions this has had on all Europe and particularly on the constitutional movement in Germany. The Whigs, too, steer between radicalism and conservative principles. However strongly they may seem to favor the former, they have not discarded the latter.

Fr: Do you indeed believe that one can rule in this fashion?

C: Are you not of this opinion?

Fr: I am in the peculiar position of agreeing in general, and still of disagreeing with you.

C: But what can you say against it? Explain your position.

Fr: Are you really inclined, coming as you do from a cheerful gathering, to enter patiently upon the examination of a very serious question? For we might be drawn deeper than you think.

C: Why shouldn't I be? Only in this way do we advance from conversation to a serious talk, from accepted opinion to search and discovery.

Fr: Then first answer me one question: have you ever found a confirmation of what you so frequently hear, that the Truth lies in the middle?

C: At least I have always noticed that it is not found in the extremes.

Fr: From extremes, consequently, you will not be able to derive the truth. Truth, moreover, lies entirely outside the scope of error. You could not abstract it from all phantoms of error taken together. You must find truth and behold it by itself, in its own sphere. From all heresies in the world you could not gather what Christianity is. You must read the Gospel in order to know it. Nay, we may claim that from the praise or censure of the world no sound judgment will ever be formed, however conscientiously we try to determine the mean between them.

C: I shall let your thesis stand for the moment. But what has it to do with the "juste milieu"?

Fr: In the state, too, you observe the extremes of opinion. They might not contain the correct one, I admit. But who says that it lies in the middle?

C: The state is no doctrine. The parties do not merely defend opinions.

They themselves are powers, forces that oppose, fight, and displace each other, as we can see every day.

Fr: And between them, now, you think the government shall hold the balance?

C: Yes, indeed; governing is guiding, directing. ...

Fr: But now I ask you: how is it able to do so? Where does it get the power?

C: There is no constitution in our time which does not grant a significant measure of power even to a limited government.

Fr: Allow me: power by itself is insufficient. Power is merely an instrument. Its usefulness depends entirely on the ends for which it is employed, and whether you know how to use it at all. By itself your government would have no significance.

C: Why so? Is it not important to prevent conflict, to further the general welfare? – Listen now: however we might define state and society, there is always a contrast between superiors and subjects, between the mass of the ruled and the small number of the rulers. Let things be as they may, you will always find that ultimately the interests of the large number prevail. The ruler submits to them one way or the other. Among the masses, however, there will always be discord and divergent parties. But we should not always consider this as simply a sign of disorganization. Frequently it is only the way of life in which the public welfare thrives quite well. What more can the government do than prevent the preponderance of one or the other party, or a dangerous clash of both?

Fr: You shall not escape me by this answer. In your view the political arena belongs to the parties; they are the center of life; the government is only the point of indifference. This very argument I shall not concede to you.

C: And why not?

Fr: You will admit, and it is implicit in your words, that the parties of which you speak represent spiritual forces, not only a certain measure of power.

C: Yes, undoubtedly spiritual forces and tendencies.

Fr: Must not the government itself be the stronger spiritual power in order to oppose these other forces and bridle them? You ascribe action to the government. But what is the “agent”, the motive power? Mere goodwill for mediation will not suffice. You must have an active essence, a Self.

C: However that be, this much always remains true, that the government must hold the middle ground between the parties.

Fr: At this point we agree and we disagree. There are, it seems to me, two conceptions of the “juste milieu”. According to one it is of a rather negative kind: the parties constitute the state; and the ruling authority, zealous not to harm them, holds the balance between

them. That seems to be your conception. According to the other, however, it is a positive idea. It excludes, I admit, the parties, the extremes, but only because it has a positive content of its own, its natural innate tendency which above all else it must realize.

C: You are indeed right, that this problem leads us into profounder regions. It is the nature of the state in general toward which – I confess to my satisfaction – our conversation now tends. I have already frequently noticed that on this matter you have formed an opinion different from my own. If you have nothing better to do tonight, give me a full account of it. What do you understand by the positive spiritual content of the state? Do not all states start from the same origin? Have they not all identical obligations? Are not their differences merely accidental?

Fr: That is just the point. I answer a decided “no” to all these questions which you seem to answer affirmatively. If we want to understand each other we must now advance one step further.

Do you know the small book that lies there on the table?

C: *Les deux derniers chapitres de ma philosophie de la guerre.*² By whom?

Fr: Read also the title page.

C: I see, by Chambray,* the diligent and penetrating historian of the Russian campaign. And the contents are even indicated on the title page. Chapter IX. *Des institutions militaires dans leur rapports avec les constitutions politiques et avec les institutions civiles.*³ Quite a fortunate approach. I am eager to know his opinions.

Fr: He finds that by inner necessity military institutions correspond to the state of society, to the civil constitution.

C: Give an example.

Fr: The English army corresponds to the Unreformed Parliament. The aristocracy which sat in both Houses voted annually for its maintenance. As it was in their interest to maintain the existing order, since the aristocracy was in reality the state, they reserved the officers’ commissions for themselves through some peculiar institutions, and they have kept them still. Non-commissioned officers and privates, on the other hand, are enlisted. They get better pay and more careful attention than in any other nation, which is necessary and possible on account of the high standards of that nation. It keeps their morale high. At the same time strictest discipline and harsh punishment hold them in subjection.

² *The Two Last Chapters of My Philosophy of War.*

* *La Philosophie de la Guerre. Oeuvres du Marquis de Chambray*, vol. III.

³ *On Military Institutions in Their Relationship to Political Constitutions and Civil Institutions.*

- C: From this it seems to follow that if they changed the constitution still further, reforms in the army would not be far off.
- Fr: I do not doubt it, as soon as the reforms have gone still deeper.
- C: The difference between the English and the Prussian army also derives from this dependence of military institutions on the civil constitution.
- Fr: In Prussia, too, the author finds military and civil institutions in complete accord. Universal military service corresponds to individual liberty and the division of property, the institution of the *Landwehr* to municipal rights, the privileged one-year term of service of the educated classes to their social position in general. The fact that the petty officers can expect a pension ties them closely to the state. "A country," the author exclaims, "which has a militia like the *Landwehr* and institutions like the *Städteordnung* indeed possesses liberty."^{*}
- C: How utterly different were those two armies which defeated Napoleon at Waterloo: both of closely related nations, but fashioned after different inner motives, one of hired men, well-paid, tenacious, aristocratic, the other of conscripted citizens, mobile, prepared to suffer deprivations if necessary, and untiring. It is truly significant that the union of two so opposite military brotherhoods – one of which represented the old, the other the new state of Germanic Europe – won the last, decisive victory. You can understand why at that time Wellington declined the pursuit, and why he has since shown no taste to change the institutions of his army. In this, too, he is an anti-reformer. He was never able to get even an idea of what his allies were like.
- Does Chambray also speak of the French army after Napoleon?
- Fr: He hardly admires it. He cannot stand it when a general who has won twenty battles exercises no more political rights than a grocer who pays a couple of hundred francs taxes. Advancement, he finds, is far more dependent on the recommendations of a deputy who takes only a personal interest in the candidate, than on the commander-in-chief who has tested him under the most diverse conditions in competition with his fellow candidates. Even many officers seem interested in revolution, because, as you can easily foresee, in that case there will be many resignations and consequently numerous promotions.
- C: Strange, how the conditions of society infuse their predominating traits into each separate institution. And it is doubly strange in the

* "La liberté existe de fait dans un pays qui a une milice telle que la *landwehr* prussienne et des institutions municipales comme celles de la Prusse." Ibid., 3rd edn, Paris 1839, III, p.312. Ranke, of course, had used an earlier edition.

case of the armed forces which have such an autonomous purpose and are quite independent from the course of the civil administration. Everything that has proved useful to neighbor or enemy has always been eagerly appropriated for them.

Fr: That is exactly my point. The idea that inspires and dominates the whole, the prevailing tendency of the minds, and conditions in general, these are what determine the formation and the character of every institution. Now you might say that an institution has an independent significance quite of its own. But as to that, I see – in the abstracted frame of an institution hardly more than a postulate, a possibility. No, only through practical application does it assume a spiritual reality. But then the differences become evident at once.

C: I admit that I often thought I perceived something of the sort. We are often advised to adopt this or that institution from another country. But who will guarantee that with us it will not turn into something else? The French wished to make the German system of education their own. This system, however, is so firmly rooted in the needs, the ideas, and the development of the German Protestant church, it is so strongly permeated with its spirit, so steeped in it, that probably only the merest outline, only a pale copy of the original could be reproduced. You know what a difference there is between the universities of the various countries, although they all rest on the same historical foundation.

Fr: Very well. I am pleased that you agree with me. This notion is an essential part of the theory which we have to elucidate. Identical institutions, of the same purpose, resting on common historical foundations, still assume, as we saw, the most divergent forms in different countries. What do you think is the cause of this?

C: The difference of their constitutions, no doubt. The Church of England produced the English universities, the parliamentary constitution shaped military institutions – all of our institutions are most intimately connected with our church and our state.

Fr: I admit that. But I ask you further: on what does the constitution depend?

C: I suppose you are not asking how each has developed in the course of time. All that matters, I should think, is what it consists of now, the form of government, the relationship between its various branches, the predominance of one or the other, the country's entire inner economy, finally the level of civilization in that nation.

Fr: Were that so, then you should be able to copy constitutions, and, after some preparation and assimilation, transplant them to foreign soil. But if, as you admit and as it seems to make sense to you in practice, it is already difficult to transplant single institutions, will it not be outright impossible in the case of a comprehensive

constitution? Even if you succeeded in this beyond all expectation, you still would get something else, something different.

C: Yes, according to the modifying powers of different conditions, just as a living constitution undergoes incessant transformations on its native soil.

Fr: Let us not be deceived by possibilities in which we really do not believe. External forms may be transplanted, but that element in which they have their source, not merely their historical roots but the spirit that links past and present and which also must animate the future – how would you copy that? Or rather – for even copying would not do – you would have to take hold of that spirit and breathe it into your new creation.

C: But I should say that there still exists an inner affinity. Everywhere I observe three Estates, similar constitutional forms, corresponding parties that take the warmest interest in affairs by which they are but remotely touched. There is the spirit of aristocracy, of democracy, of mixed or pure monarchy. I do not say that everything is identical, far from it. One constitution is more perfectly developed in one, and a second in another respect. But why should we be unable to select the more perfect elements and appropriate them?

Fr: It seems to me that you overestimate these categories of constitutions. They are classifications like those of botany. Do you think a lover of flowers recognizes his flowers by their stamens? Those distinctions were made in antiquity and thus remained in usage. But they leave much unstated. Something besides the democratic spirit lived at Athens. Democracy has not produced the aesthetic ideals of Athenian art. Plato was a poor democrat. And think of all the formal attributes of aristocracy. Never could you imagine a Sparta from them alone, not to speak of its deeds and ethics, but only of the working of its constitution, only of the relationship between Spartiates, Lacedaemonians, and Helots.

C: Yet you will not call these distinctions unimportant. You cannot deny that the various states have something in common.

Fr: It seems to me, however, that we must distinguish between formal and real aspects. The formal aspect only covers generalities, the real covers peculiarities, the living elements. Certain forms of a constitution, particularly those stipulating a limitation of personal powers and the definition of class relationships, may be necessary to all states. But they do not constitute the source of life which alone gives content to all forms. There is an element which makes a state not a subdivision of general categories, but a living thing, an individual, a unique self.

C: If I understand you correctly, your opinion differs from others in this respect: we usually start with an analysis of the differences of constitutional forms. From there we proceed to point out the

peculiarities within the categories which we established. You, on the other hand, consider these forms only a secondary, subordinate element. The primary fact to you is the unique spiritual existence of the individual state, its principle.

Fr: Let me elucidate my theory with examples from the field of philology. The forms by which grammar operates have a general applicability; in a certain way they recur in every language. But the spirit of each particular language creates an infinite variety of modifications. Similarly by the principle of the state we must not understand a theoretical construction, but its inner life. This principle alone imparts to those forms of human society – which, I admit, are indispensable – their characteristic modification, the concreteness of reality.

C: I see. You postulate different spiritual essences, as it were, which alone infuse life into all varieties of constitutions and societies. But do you not then defy all possibility of general laws of politics? You seem to overlook the most fundamental questions from which our political theory starts.

Fr: You mean the inquiries concerning the original formation of states, the *Pactum Unionis et Subjectionis*?

C: Yes, what were the first beginnings of the state, whether from force or contract; did the government exercise a delegated or naturally inherent authority?

Fr: Forgive me, this is a field which I dislike to discuss. It lies beyond our perception. Have you perhaps visited the observatory recently and tried our new Fraunhofer telescope?

C: What brings you to that?

Fr: When you have surveyed the entire firmament, even the immense stellar systems which constitute the Milky Way, and advance your gaze still deeper into the infinite space, then in the ultimate distance you encounter a second night, as it were, still more profound and dark, on the bottom of which you perceive a new world of more marvelous phenomena.

C: The nebulae, you mean?

Fr: Dimly radiating, liquid meteors, sometimes like disks, sometimes like arcs, sometimes like rings, and yet a stellar system which you might consider still in its formative stage. Now I ask you, should we base our astronomical knowledge on the hazy observations we can gather from this distant field?

C: Do you really think you can compare the theories of the origin of the state, which seem so strictly reasoned, with such a chimerical enterprise?

Fr: They overlook what is nearest, and from the darkest distance gather disconnected facts to apply them to the immediate problem. But Kepler discovered the laws which bear his name only after the most

exact and painstaking observation of a celestial body that could be readily watched and calculated.

C: But would you deny the validity of the general laws of politics as they are now formulated?

Fr: To me they are as doubtful as the value of the so-called philosophical grammar. It, too, never achieved anything by a logical analysis of general linguistic forms. Each language represents a thousand different modifications of these forms. Only by comprehensive historical investigation and combination can we aspire to a divining perception of the deeply hidden, all-embracing spiritual laws. As with this grammar, so with the theory of politics which starts from an empty concept of the state. Take Fichte's statement: "As the surface of the earth is divided by oceans, rivers, mountains, and mankind is separated by them, so," he says, "it became necessary that different states originated." Do you really believe that you can obtain from this starting point a true perception and appreciation of uniqueness and spiritual differences?

C: But still the discussion of general problems will always remain indispensable. The individual must know why he is a member of a state and why he obeys its authority.

Fr: You are right. Political theory starts from that need. It is the mediator between private law and public law. The former seeks protection under the latter, its final guarantee. The latter absorbs in itself the elements of the former.

C: And, indeed, is it not this mediation that matters? Is not the general security one of the chief results of modern government?

Fr: I do not deny it. But from this general axiom, which, after all, reflects but the needs of private life, you can only derive the necessity of certain limited forms and institutions, just as in our nebulae the volatile, liquid schemes appeared here and there more compact and grouped around a nucleus. It may be possible to explain the first beginnings of growth in this way; but you cannot attain perception and estimation of the fully developed individual phenomena.

C: You deny then that the general concept of the state can be of much help?

Fr: I am of the opinion that the mastery of politics must be based on history; it must be founded on the study of the powerful states that have reached a high degree of inner development.

C: But is it then impossible to advance from the general to the particular?

Fr: Without a leap, without a new start you never can progress from the general to the particular. The spiritual force which suddenly arises as concrete phenomenon before your eyes in unimagined uniqueness cannot be derived from a higher principle. From the particular, perhaps, you can ascend with careful boldness to the general. But

there is no way leading from the general theory to the perception of the particular.

C: Yet in what do you perceive the particular?

Fr: Let us begin with the very simplest example. Look at our Jacques, a kind of cosmopolitan valet, who has already tried his fortune in service in Italy, Constantinople, and St. Petersburg before ill luck finally blew him into the hermitage of a German scholar. Isn't he every inch an old Frenchman?

C: He swings his arms like one when he walks on the street, he puts his hands on the lamp like one, he behaves like one if something unexpected happens. He feels, perhaps he thinks like one.

Fr: Our mother country is not where we find happiness at last. Our mother country, on the contrary, is with us, in us. Germany is alive in us, we represent it, willy-nilly, in every country to which we go, in each climate. We are rooted in it from the beginning, and we can never emancipate ourselves from it. This mysterious something that animates the lowliest as well as the greatest, this spiritual atmosphere in which we breathe, precedes every constitution. It invigorates and swells all its forms.

C: It seems that you identify nationality and state.

Fr: Yet this is less the case than we should believe. Nations have a tendency to be states; but I do not know of a single one which really is. France, which perhaps closest approaches this ideal, does not comprise all Frenchmen by any means, neither those Canadians who in their remoteness and isolation reputedly still continue to represent the old feudal France, nor its next-door neighbors in Savoy and Switzerland. England is still further from it. Her colonies have turned from her in great numbers and entered upon a course quite opposite to that of their mother country. Of Germany we will not speak at all. Even if we wanted to consider the German Confederation a kind of state, which would hardly do justice to the term, it would still be far from including all Germans.

C: How do you explain this phenomenon? Nationality, if I follow your theory, should be the basis of the state.

Fr: The sphere of the state is inherently far narrower than that of the nation. The state is a modification not only of human, but also of national existence.

C: And how does this modification arise?

Fr: We cannot descend into the fathomless depths of the past. Our history covers only a brief span of time, and how incompletely and doubtfully even that! How would it help us to return to epochs when different ideas of heaven and earth and different religions prevailed, when different needs, failings, and virtues created their own appropriate institutions? We are facing a world of middle-class constitutions. But evolution does not stop for a minute. From

insignificant origins grandiose structures arise by a new inspiration. Even from destruction new forms grow, under torments, it is true, but with lasting results. The observation of this process and the discovery of the laws of growth seem more important, and to me at least, more interesting, than all abstract speculation.

C: You must already have started to gather your facts. I shall not ask you for them tonight. But, in general, what do you think is the origin of these new formations?

Fr: The nature of things and opportunity, genius and good fortune, all conspire.

C: Good fortune? You mean the verdict of events, victory?

Fr: Yes, the moment when independence was achieved and secured.

C: In your political philosophy, it seems, foreign affairs will play a great part.

Fr: The world, as we know, has been parceled out. To be somebody, you have to rise by your own efforts. You must achieve genuine independence. Your rights will not be voluntarily ceded to you. You must fight for them.

C: Is it not brute force alone, then, that matters?

Fr: Not so much as the word "fight" might seem to imply. With independence a foundation has been laid, a community achieved. But should it rise to universal significance, it needs moral energy above all else. Only through this can the rivals, the enemies in world competition, be overcome.

C: Then you consider the bloody profession of arms a struggle of moral energies. Beware lest you become over-sublime.

Fr: You know very well that our ancestors, who were certainly not sublime, thought so too. For instance, those Tencterians, those Amivarians, offered the Romans competition by arms for the possession of vacant territory. But seriously, you will be able to name few significant wars for which it could not be proved that genuine moral energy achieved the final victory.

C: And from war, from victory, you now want to derive also the forms of internal political organization?

Fr: Not exactly, not directly, but their modifications. The position of a state in the world depends on the degree of independence it has attained. It is obliged, therefore, to organize all its internal resources for the purpose of self-preservation. This is the supreme law of the state.

C: You seem to favor a military tyranny.

Fr: How could a magnificent position ever be acquired without the voluntary and perfect cooperation of all citizens? By the invisible activity of unifying ideas the great communities are gradually formed. Fortunate if there is a man of genius to guide them. He would never have the power to command them.

- C: I see. Your military state would then at the most be based on voluntary discipline.
- Fr: You seem to reproach me with a charge which Aristotle laid to some ancient lawgivers: I thought more of making a state great and powerful than its citizens wise and good; I legislated more for times of struggle and crisis than for peace and leisure. You are not wrong as to the beginnings of existence when independence must be fought for. Gradually, however, the need for peace in human nature will assert itself; then a balance will be struck. But let us speak of that later. For the moment let us stop at our present conclusions and summarize them. It is not the distant origins as much as the matured facts before our very eyes that attract our attention.
- C: And what do you see?
- Fr: All states that count in the world and make themselves felt are motivated by special tendencies of their own. It would be ridiculous to explain them as ever so many police departments for the benefit of those individuals who, let us say, have made a contract for the protection of private property. Rather, these tendencies are of a spiritual nature, and the personalities of all citizens are determined, nay ineradicably molded by them. In this way differences arise. They in turn diversify everywhere the forms of constitutions, which, I admit, are born of a common necessity. Everything depends on the supreme idea. That is the meaning when we say that states, too, derive their origin from God. For the idea is of divine origin. Each independent state has its own original life, which may have different stages and may perish like all living matter. But while it lives it penetrates and dominates its entire environment, identical only with itself.
- C: In this sense, you mean that states are individuals?
- Fr: Individualities, analogous one to another, but basically more independent of each other. Instead of the passing conglomerations which the contractual theory of the state creates like cloud formations, I perceive spiritual substances, original creations of the human mind – I might say, thoughts of God.
- C: I do not want to contradict you. You are too firm in your opinion. And I confess I feel attracted by it. But now let us descend a little from these general reflections. Tell me, do you hold that the present states, too, have this origin and substance?
- Fr: My theory is based just on them. It can be most perfectly proved, I think. But the evening is too short for that.
- C: But let me ask you an important question. Were it as you say, each state should follow its own course, and we should not see the European states divided into two hostile, incessantly menacing camps, mainly over the issue of internal institutions.
- Fr: Yes, there is a sense of European unity. But nevertheless, each state

was well advanced in its peculiar development before the Revolution, and everyone will, no doubt, resume it as soon as the after-effects of the revolutionary wars subside.

C: But these very wars seem to refute your theory. Has not the entire Europe waged war against the Revolution? How could they have agreed on it, had they not been animated by common interests?

Fr: You will clearly remember how difficult it was to reach an agreement. Nor, if you will think back still further, was the case just as you described it. For one, they were attacked. Secondly, how much time passed before they allied themselves! Only the huge danger of a newly-risen power, which threatened independence everywhere, finally created, in the face of annihilation as it were, a common defense.

C: But witness even today the animosity between the protagonists of the liberal and absolutist principles. Tonight again they talked of the recent issues of the *Portfolio*. Do you know it?

Fr: It is right here. But now, since we apparently want to return from universal reflections to the concrete material before us and link them both together, frankly, I conclude the opposite from what the papers generally see in it.

C: Do you find it conciliatory?

Fr: It is without doubt the most vindictive and most hostile publication that has come out for a long time. But I cannot see that the great continental powers are put under suspicion by it.

C: What do you say about the dispatches of Pozzo di Borgo?

Fr: Truly, they are masterpieces. I did not believe that modern diplomacy could produce such excellent work.

C: Do you also approve of their contents?

Fr: They at least help us to correct some errors. The three continental powers have so often been accused of participation in the exaggerated and one-sided measures of the supporters of the monarchical principle in France and Spain, nay even of fomenting and provoking them. I know no better refutation of these charges than the dispatches of Pozzo di Borgo of the year 1826 which are published here.

C: Do you think they are genuine?

Fr: We cannot decide that definitely as yet. On their face, at least, they look trustworthy. And their reasonable content speaks also for their authenticity.

C: You seem to have in mind particularly the dispatch about Ferdinand VII, in which the origins of the Spanish-Portuguese conflict really come quite clearly to light. It is at last admitted in it that the expedition of the Marquis de Chaves into Portugal, which has been the source of so much mischief, originated with a faction that dominated Ferdinand VII.

- Fr:* Be just, not only that, but also that it took place against the explicit counsel of the great powers, nay even against a given pledge.
- C:* You cannot claim, however, that they have been favorably inclined toward the constitution of Dom Pedro.
- Fr:* Certainly not. But has this constitution so far really proved able to make Portugal happy? Anyway, as you read here, the great powers wanted to let time reveal its true nature, in the opinion, I admit, that it would perish by its own flaws. But I cannot find such animosity dangerous. This very trial period could as well have proved its advantages, if it had any. In no case, however, did they approve of the violence, ill-conceived as it was, to which Ferdinand was persuaded.
- C:* You mentioned France too.
- Fr:* With true mastery and penetrating insight the mistakes are described which Charles X committed against all better counsels. They are the very same to which we must still ascribe the misfortunes of that prince. He should not have closeted himself with a narrow circle of exalted congreganists.* He should not have treated France as though she had relapsed into paganism, and he should have exerted himself more to win over the tribunals, particularly the highest courts in Paris. The *Chambre* should not have appeared as a royal tool. Villèle¹ should have been more willing to accept other talents as colleagues.
- C:* Don't you think the ills lay even deeper, in the strong position into which the revolutionary forces were allowed to advance, and their natural opposition to the old monarchy?
- Fr:* Everything worked together. After the royalists had entrenched their enemies and given them power, they did everything to provoke their wrath and to isolate themselves. It was literally fulfilled, therefore, what was predicted in these pages: that in the first real crisis that approached, the government would be without all moral support and powerless, in spite of the immense resources of power at its disposal.
- C:* You are quite a successful arguer tonight.
- Fr:* The other documents, which are here published, need no further explanation. Can you express yourself more reasonably than Count Bernstorff in his memorandum, which the blind zeal of hostile intention has placed at the head of these papers? In it is stated that the government should win over the majority of the intelligentsia. If it wanted voluntary and spontaneous obedience it had to create the conviction that it ruled not in the interest of a party but for the

* Pozzo di Borgo described them as follows: "*Un clergé exalté et encore ignorant ...hommes désignés sous le nom de congreganistes, qui allient l'ambition à une sorte de piété affectée, et qui compromettent la personne du Roi, censée de les favoriser en secret.*" *The Portfolio*, as cited in the previous chapter, Vol. I., no. 5; p.8.

¹ Jean Baptiste Comte de Villèle, French prime minister 1822–1828.

general welfare. These diplomats are far above the hatred of constitutional government which the world so readily ascribes to them. Every intimation is flatly rejected that other than legal means were to be used anywhere in Germany.

C: On that, it seems, you base your theory that the contrast between the two hostile parties in Europe really does not exist.

Fr: Sympathies and antipathies do exist. They have been caused by the course of events. But the hostility of these two camps, reputedly ready to break into an open fight, is a chimerical fiction.

C: And what do you make of the friction between Austria and Russia which these documents reveal?

Fr: Pardon my smile; tonight every argument seems to serve my purpose. You must be rather ignorant of the diplomatic affairs of the year 1828, that you are so greatly surprised by the vehement expression of this misunderstanding. Who did not hear of it then, and explain it roughly as we here read that it really was? It only proves that the alliance of the great continental powers, in this case the alliance between Russia and Austria, was not stronger than their respective interests. There is no trend of opinion, however dominant, which can break the force of political interests. In this respect, indeed, the *Portfolio* is a particularly remarkable case. It is the first sensational European publication which at least unconsciously transcends the differences of domestic politics and again relegates politics to the field of power and foreign affairs where it belongs.

C: Truly, you seem to be right. Do not smile now; – but I find myself almost in the role of that nice young man who was the companion of Goethe's last years, and who has just published his conversations with him. I, too, can say: I enjoyed your observations that there is a living, unique, inherent principle in each of our great states, by which all its foreign affairs and internal developments are shaped. I shall keep it in mind and examine it in my quiet moments.

Now for the time being, let us once more return to those general questions. I still have some objections which I shall raise with your permission.

Fr: I shall try to clear them away.

C: You claim such a considerable part of a citizen's activities for the state. How do you remunerate him; what do you give him in return?

Fr: I don't think I expressed myself as though I described the ideal state. I only tried to understand the one before our eyes. And does it not, indeed, claim a large share of everybody's energy? Taxes consume quite a significant slice of the nation's income. Many invest their fortunes and their youth in the preparation for state service. And in our parts nobody is exempt from military service. Autonomous private life no longer exists. Our activities naturally belong primarily to our community.

- C:* But what does the private citizen receive for all his participations?
- Fr:* In the good state it is its own reward. No citizen thinks of withdrawing from it. He recognizes the need for it. And there is no purely private existence for him. He would not be himself, did he not belong to this particular state as his spiritual fatherland.
- C:* But I ask you, does this spontaneity of devotion exist in reality as strongly as you postulate?
- Fr:* I am far from claiming that. I know countries where the duties are unwillingly and reluctantly performed. In Italy for instance. There, too, the state demands personal and material sacrifices according to European standards. Unfortunately, however, it cannot induce voluntary cooperation. The citizen feels the obligations imposed on him as a burden. He thinks himself overwhelmed and forced, and he shirks his duty as much as possible. That is just why that unity of private and public affairs which characterizes the true state, cannot be achieved. I fear that this will finally cause a break even in the moral energy of the state. Private activity, too, does not thrive as it could or should. I admit all this; but it represents an incomplete, an abnormal condition.
- C:* But are you able to avoid it, here as elsewhere?
- Fr:* I admit that nothing is more urgent and necessary than to consider how to prevent it. That is the secret of a progressive power. Whatever resists its entreaties is not yet completely its own. The unification of all members by voluntary cooperation must be the primary aim of its internal policy.
- C:* But will that be possible?
- Fr:* That is the problem. You must preserve the peculiarities of a province, or of a section of the country, and yet unite it by indestructible ties with the whole.
- C:* And on what do you think rests this connection of a province and of each individual citizen with the whole?
- Fr:* Ultimately, undoubtedly, on the fact that the idea of the state permeates every citizen, that he feels in himself some of its spiritual force, that he considers himself a member of the whole with an affection for it, and that the feeling of community in him is stronger than the feeling of provincial, local, and personal isolation.
- C:* What means does a state have to attain this goal?
- Fr:* Nowadays every government must be benevolent. Its powers, as we all agree, are based on the general welfare of the people anyway. But it also must show that it is benevolent in the proper way. It must take care to be recognized. People should know what it does. And every single citizen must see that his own affairs, as far as they are connected with the public affairs, are dealt with as efficiently as possible. If their reluctance is finally overcome, this invisible, penetrating, unifying motive will have seized them all. Compulsion

will be transformed on a higher level into voluntary individual initiative. Duty will become liberty.

C: You would ask for patriotism also in the days of tranquility?

Fr: Then particularly must it be cultivated lest it be lacking in times of stress. In a certain sense it must be the guiding principle of all human activity.

C: You make the entire man a political being.

Fr: I am convinced that the development even of a man's personality depends on the sincerity of the inner interest which he takes, not necessarily in the forms of a constitution, but in the progress of public welfare, in the common good.

C: Then you would think formal participation in counsel and decision not even necessary?

Fr: I don't deny that it might be helpful. But if we consult our experience, we must admit that it is not so everywhere. I even fear that it would not be uniformly applicable. There is something in the spirit of our monarchies that resists it.

C: I am eager to know what you consider to be the spirit of our monarchies.

Fr: Let us not discuss it too extensively. We would have to bring in too many factors of politics, law, and history. But to stay in our familiar field of administration, and still to give you an answer, I say that the meaning of monarchical institutions is to put the right man in the right place.

C: But do you not have to admit that just this is not always the case?

Fr: The actual performance depends on a variety of conditions. This still remains their intention and tendency, however.

C: Again I am afraid you favor despotism. Why should not everybody, as far as possible, be called to share in the deliberations? Why should you be condemned to obey?

Fr: Not everybody, as you will recall from Plato, must do everything. There are innumerable branches of human activity, and it is nature's fascinating miracle that it always creates new talents for each. The common advantage requires that everybody do what he is best fitted for. You would crush a poet if you consulted him on matters of tithes which won't be a bit better in consequence. That is the advantage of a commonwealth that there are private pursuits which, though animated by the spirit of the state, are not weighed down by the desire to share in the government.

C: You are avoiding the question of obedience.

Fr: That is sometimes spoken of just as though a horde of foreigners had pushed its way into the government. But let me ask you: who are the men that govern and administer? Do they not rise directly from the nation? I do not see how it offends anybody's pride, if among a number of brothers and relatives, let us say one chooses industry,

another commerce, a third scholarship, a fourth agriculture, and so on, and if finally one of them rises to the capacity of participating in the government, where in the last analysis he still carries on the common affairs of the others. It is hard enough for him to get there. Governing does not consist in giving orders, or in any satisfaction which petty vanity might find in it. It is the most difficult art of doing a good job in conducting public affairs; without innate capacity, without previous training and long practice nobody can attain it. Compared with other human activities it is perhaps the most difficult of all. It requires both profoundest insight into existing relationships and perfect freedom of mind in order to give shape to the yet shapeless future. Do you think it is a misfortune that this task is left to those who alone understand it? They represent the choice of the most skillful experts among the entire nation who have trained themselves for this purpose.

C: But will you always find men who deserve to be obeyed?

Fr: Nature, which is always complete, guarantees that they are there. All that matters is to find them.

C: But then there must also be some limitation, considering the human tendency of abusing power.

Fr: For once, you don't have to regulate everything from the top. There are so many deeper spheres in which nothing is more welcome than spontaneity of expression. And I do not say that this form of administration is absolutely perfect. It can degenerate in a thousand ways. Only that much seems obvious to me: it is founded in the nature of things, it is inherent in the idea of our monarchies and capable of the most grandiose development.

C: And you would demand of the private citizen voluntary subordination based on the conviction that this is the best arrangement?

Fr: This spontaneity is the compensation for all service to the state. At all events, private and public affairs again coincide on a higher level. Private pursuits are propelled by the flywheel of public concerns, and the common weal rises from private prosperity. The spiritual force of the state must animate every single citizen.

C: You say that it must. Yet it happens with many that it does not.

Fr: That depends on whether or not a state has taken a live hold of all its members. Here, too, are degrees and gradations.

C: Here you yourself touch upon another question I was going to ask you: how can you assume there are gradations? Should not all states be equally perfect according to your view?

Fr: Only in so far as we consider solely the idea to which we, as I said, ascribe divine origin, but not in its realization, its actual form in the world.

C: Which gradations are there between life and life?

Fr: Analogy may lead us to it. I find only the difference between health

and sickness. A healthy body is in full possession of all its powers and all its limbs. It does not feel the effects of the elements, or at least it resists them without effort. A diseased or feeble body, however, is affected or even perishes by them. It is not its own master. Similarly, a healthy commonwealth inspires all its members. It rests safely on its principle. The conflicts of the faction-torn world outside affect it, of course, on its border but not in its internal life. You are already infected and no longer your proper self, if you are too eagerly interested in what happens in your neighbor's yard.

C: In this respect then it is possible that the state becomes still more perfect. It admits of progress.

Fr: Admits only? The state is a living being which by its nature incessantly grows and irresistibly progresses.

C: After what model, toward which ideal?

Fr: All life carries its ideal in itself. The innermost urge of spiritual life is movement toward its idea, toward greater perfection. This urge is innate in it, implanted in it at its origin.

C: You will not deny that frequently obstacles, failures, and, let us admit, even retrogression occur.

Fr: How could they be lacking in human affairs? But we should not be discouraged by them. If we are otherwise healthy, they are of a passing nature.

C: But I cannot see how they can be rendered innocuous, because there is no formal counterbalance to the government in your theory.

Fr: Nonetheless, there is the spirit of the community, which cannot so easily be overcome. It can be obscured, but as long as there is still some vital energy left, it will reappear, gain the upper hand, and finally hold all in its sway. It is a great thing, anyway, how the interest of the public is personified in the prince and appears necessarily as his own cause in his self-esteem.

C: But why don't you give the spirit of the community complete reality and representative expression? Why do you shun the deliberative bodies?

Fr: Implicit harmony, says Heraclitus, is better than harmony on the surface. Also do not misunderstand me. I do not condemn these institutions. Wherever they exist I wish they would develop as salutarily and brilliantly as possible. But I do not believe them altogether indispensable. I am of the opinion that public opinion has still other organs which often serve it even better.

C: You mean that the inner unity is better than any form of the social contract?

Fr: What belongs together by nature does not need the latter. Among parents and children no compact is necessary.

C: I have one more question on my mind. You ascribe to your state many attributes of spiritual unity, and the devotion which you

demand is so complete that I fear you encroach upon the domain of the church.

Fr: I should think not. State and church are eternally separate. The church unites man in the highest and supremest community. She, indeed, dictates an unchanging rule of conduct, the rules of this mysterious community, of religion. She tries to hold off everything that might violate it. But there also is the limit of her authority. In a positive way she does not have any influence on things human. Whatever degree of secular power she claims, that much she loses in spiritual power. As I said, she has no immediate connection with the institutions of the state.

C: But still they are both of a spiritual nature. Where do you draw the borderline?

Fr: The spirit of the church applies without exception to all mankind. It is the universal spirit. By nature each church claims at least to be the universal one. The idea of the state, however, would be destroyed if it were to include the entire world. Of states there are many. The spirit of the state contains a trace of the divine, but at the same time it is propelled by human nature. It represents a community of a more limited nature, above which, more removed from practical needs, that higher community arises.

C: Now I believe I grasp your thoughts in a general way. States are spiritual substances, by necessity and idea different from each other. The forms of the constitution and the different institutions are necessitated by the general conditions of human existence; they are, however, modified by this idea, and develop their fullest reality only through it. Hence they are necessarily divergent. Up to a certain point private and public affairs are identical. Private life, too, is dependent on the idea which animates the state. These manifold creations of spiritual life are subordinated to the highest community of the church.

Fr: But grasp also these entities in their full significance: these many separate, earthly-spiritual communities called forth by genius and moral energy, growing irresistibly, progressing amidst all turmoil of the world toward the ideal, each in its own way! Behold them, these celestial bodies, in their cycles, their mutual gravitation, their systems!

C: Enough for tonight. I already hear the carriages rumble by on their way home from the party. We shall discuss the doubts that arise in my mind some later day.

Fr: I should have expressed myself far more clearly and completely. Be thanked, however, for your acceptance of my theories, without rejecting them at once. It is so calming and reassuring to have provoked a congenial conviction in a kindred spirit.

9 On the Relation of and Distinction between History and Politics

(1836)

As you are well aware, my honored audience and dear colleagues, nothing occupies people in our times more than the desire and inclination to improve government or to cast it into new forms. I believe that this urge originates from two causes: partly from boredom with the institutions of our ancestors, which they say have changed and deviated from the original intentions of their creators; and partly from a certain preconceived notion about the best forms of government, which has, somehow, been absorbed into every soul like a physical necessity and to whose standard the state must conform itself for its own good, either at once or gradually. Nor can we say that only ignorant or evil persons, seized with an inordinate desire for novelty, have chosen this path. We know rather that there are honorable men, patriots, who have adopted the same viewpoint, or at least have not condemned it.

But it is marvelous that this general tendency of thought and spirit has not brought forth its expected fruit! How many states are there which have not been troubled and shaken by this pressure? And have we not seen men driven to complete blindness and criminal acts in the carrying out of such plans, which they dreamed would lead them to wisdom and virtue? Indeed, we have observed that the praiseworthy zeal to improve a bad and perverted form of government has been transformed into a rejection of good laws, into public disorders, and, finally, into a frenzy of madness. Thus great storms break out, preventing the pilot from controlling the rudder of government or steering the ship by a fixed course. The people are deprived of their ability to consider or to recognize what would be useful or harmful; one would be fortunate indeed to rescue oneself safe and sound from the dark clouds and stormy winds which sweep the sea.

The freedom for which men have aspired has often been turned into a slavery detested by honorable men through the domination of a foolish and terrible mob. And when we inquire about the form of government which has resulted from this change, we can discover nothing based on solid foundations which could promise or ensure that security which is necessary for the real development and cultivation of the human spirit. Indeed, the more a state is shaken and torn by these storms of opinion and party, the more it seems to drive itself into still more violent disturbances. In the words of Vergil, it flows with burning sorrow here and there. The most extreme tendencies are always preferred to whatever is good and

healthy. Thus whenever a division of minds occurs today, it suddenly seizes upon and poisons an otherwise peaceful people. At times we fear that the entire series of previously overcome misfortunes is about to occur once again.

I have no doubt, dear listeners, that most of you have thoroughly studied the reasons why such justified hopes and expectations have so seldom met with success. The causes, we all understand, are of many kinds and differ in different countries. They can be explained only with great thoroughness and completeness, as our own age has certainly learned. But there is one reason, and a very universal one, which is often advanced, and it is a discussion of this reason which I should like to bring to your attention.

History, they say, not only is no longer listened to by the younger generation, but is even intentionally set aside. If youth paid more attention to its precepts and to its continuing series of events, and considered their necessity, then matters might have gone more according to our liking. Though this argument has the appearance of complete truth, it is actually somewhat dubious. For many deny decisively that history can or must be drawn upon to bring order to government. What does history, which gives us a supply of knowledge of previous ages, have to do with the improvement of contemporary states? The establishment or improvement of their political constitutions requires a completely different science. History sometimes excuses deep-rooted evils by explaining their origins, but their remedy can be obtained only by the new science of politics, first developed in our time. There is a steady progress of the human race, and we can raise no longer those questions which occurred in other ages, only those which concern us today. When one is afraid to trust one's own strength and looks to untrodden paths to find newer or better things, the human situation appears to resemble more the sorry picture of a stagnant pond or dirty swamp than the joyful and happy image of a running stream.

And, in fact, to concede the undeniable: drawing history into the governing of a state involves the greatest difficulties, and not only for the reason cited above. History itself does not offer such certain prescriptions that no one could doubt their worth. Writers appear daily who neither seek nor find anything in history which does not agree with their political doctrines. Do not the same differences in opinion which divide states into parties also appear no less passionately in the researching and retelling of the events? There are disputes over the nature and character of the Middle Ages, over the original customs and mores of the German peoples, over the virtue of men honored in antiquity, and, finally, over the origin and beginnings of the human race. So far is history from improving politics that it itself is more usually corrupted by it.

But how are we to judge all this, my dear listeners? Is it really true, as a few maintain, that there is nothing at all which is really certain and true in the study of the humanities? Do we, or do we not, know the events of ancient periods, and their history? Is it possible to understand their inner nature, or shall we remain ignorant of it for all eternity? Can we not draw up ways in which a well-governed state can be distinguished from a corrupt one, the constitution of Tarento distinguished from that of Rome, of the ways in which virtue differs from vice?

God forbid! Humanity would then descend to the level of beasts; everything would then be given over to a game of blind chance. No, no one can deny that nature and Divine Providence have afforded us a deep insight into the causes of misfortune and happiness, and the ability to determine how good laws differ from evil customs. No one will maintain that we suffer such great blindness or lack of understanding that we are unable to distinguish anything about the nature and ways of previous ages.

What is your verdict, my esteemed audience? Do you believe that some knowledge of past events contains nothing useful which is applicable to the present or future? Will you agree that there is no close connection and kinship between history and politics? I cannot think that you would agree to such a view. But there is a question as to what relationship exists between the two. This question can hardly be raised in our days without the danger of error. Nonetheless, its utility and necessity are so great that I do not shrink from raising it, especially amid a gathering whose good intentions are beyond doubt. I shall thus discuss the relationship between history and politics, attempting to show what the borders of these disciplines are, where one touches upon the other, where they part ways, and what distinctions exist between them.

Starting with history, as the better known of the pair, let us mention that its aim is not so much to gather facts and to arrange them as to understand them. History rests not solely on memory, as some believe, but above all on critical understanding. Nor can we deny that it is difficult to distinguish truth from falsehood, and to select from many accounts the one which is factually the best. Those who know only by hearsay the role of criticism are aware of its use in historical circles. And yet this is only part of the task of historical studies.

Another still more glorious and difficult part consists in observing the causes and premises of events, as well as their results and effects, and in distinguishing exactly the intentions of men, the mistakes which cause some to fail while others succeed. We recognize why one arises and another declines, and how states are strengthened or dissolved: in short, we comprehend equally the hidden causes of events as well as their visible appearance. Whoever wishes to accomplish this turns profitably to history. Just as natural science not only attempts to draw a careful picture of nature, but also strives to investigate the higher goal of the eternal laws governing the world itself in its parts and members; just as science endeavors to press on to the inner sources of nature from which all things spring, so it is with history. Although it pursues the succession of events as sharply and accurately as possible, and attempts to give each of them its proper color and form, and ascribes to these efforts the highest value, still history goes beyond this labor and moves on to an investigation of origins, seeking to break through to the deepest and most secret motives of historical life.

Some presume to fly to such heights but deceive themselves, embracing a cloud instead of Juno. Their efforts secure them only formulas and empty wind in place of truth. A few of them are aware of an obscure sense of dissatisfaction with their ideas, take refuge in philosophical or theological doctrines, and transform their historical studies. But we should not conclude from these errors that the goal

which they have set for themselves does not exist. Though they cannot attain their object, the goal is there. The victor's palm which they fail to win will one day be awarded; and like the victor's prize at Elis, in Horace's phrase, be accompanied homeward in the awareness of divine happiness.

But we must proceed, if I am not mistaken, in a completely different way to make progress.

History by its nature must reject poesy and empty shadows, and can accept only the completely certain and sure. It requires prudence as well as boldness of spirit. On the one hand, it must research individual events with the greatest care, and avoid errors; on the other, it must not allow itself to be dissipated in the multiplicity of events, but must press on with steady gaze toward its final goal, despite the fact that this procedure denies the human yearning to comprehend everything on the first attempt. History leads us to unspeakable sweetness and refreshment at every place. For what could be more pleasant and more welcome to human understanding than to become aware of the inner core of events, of their deepest mysteries; or to observe in one nation or another how men's enterprises begin, increase in power, rise, and decline? Or gradually to attain a knowledge, either directly through a justified intuition or indirectly through a sharp-eyed, thorough recognition, of those things in which each human age excelled, or sought or strove to attain and achieved? For this is likewise a part of divine knowledge. This is what we seek with the help of history to attain; history is motivated wholly by this effort. Who will ask whether this be useful or not? It suffices to recognize that such knowledge is as useful as any other, that it belongs to the perfection of the human spirit.

We now approach politics. The question as to whether it is an art or a science requires us to begin with a few remarks about government. If I am not mistaken, there ought to appear in the life of states the same continuity of life we ascribe to the human race. Men die; one age follows another or supplants it. But states, which far outlast the longevity of the individual, enjoy a very long and always regular life. We can take Venice as an example. From the time when the city was founded in a lagoon of the Adriatic Sea, we see how it proceeded in the same manner for a thousand years: its marriage with the sea; its conquest of neighboring lands: often by craft and often by force; its creation of a secret state power; its favoring of the populace and suppression of the aristocracy; its growth, development and flowering, and its eventual decline and fall. These can be perceived by anyone who follows the history of Venice. The same theme appears in all its marvelous persistence and succession through different centuries like the life of a single person. Similarly [the Roman historian] Florus artfully distinguished certain ages in the character of the Roman state. In the course of time, collapse comes even to states themselves, and not only to those which must endure a conqueror's law and authority, but also, astonishingly, to those who have been victors and have imposed their yoke on others. The Roman state was unable to preserve or even to retain its old city laws when it began to dominate and rule the world. For it is in the nature of human affairs that the stronger part, whether it leave the battleground as victor or as vanquished, gradually gains the upper hand and destroys the individuality of the weaker part. But, as it happens, the latter's

life is not wholly destroyed; nothing is ever completely abolished. Though something appears to collapse, it is only merged into a more perfect society. Thus a new life is born, and another course of events established, which are closely related to the former existence, and connected with it in retrospect.

And if we now ask, "What is it which enables a state to live?" then it is the same as with the individual, whose life incorporates both body and spirit. So too with the state. Everything depends on spirit, which is the pre-eminent of the two. Although we are not granted the privilege of bringing the hidden to view, revealing the soul and its activity, the very source and current of life, by indicating it precisely with definite proper names, still we are able to observe what lies before our eyes, and to reach conclusions about the remote causes of events by reflecting on its mysteries. For the spirit cannot be touched with the hand or the eye; it is known by its successes and its effects. Who would be foolish enough to think that he could see God with his eyes? And yet no one would hesitate to maintain that He exists and that everything has its origin in Him.

I come now to the point which I have undertaken to prove. We perceive states and peoples, whether contained in larger or smaller boundaries, living and flourishing according to their own customs, which they share with no other people, and according to their own laws and particular institutions. It is obvious that each state has a completely definite character and a life of its own, which distinguishes it from all others, and that everything which it has and does derives from this character. Since this is so, it is not hard to indicate the task and duty of those who govern the state. Esteemed listeners, how would you judge those who, caught up in some attractive prejudice, seek to achieve their own ends, regarding everything older as outmoded and useless; men who set aside everything without considering whether its forms and laws have been blessed by usage, and who undertake to transform abruptly a state which they do not really know? It seems to me that they hardly fulfill their duty, but instead tear down rather than build. Let us listen to a man who has some experience in governing. "Every people," Cicero tells us, "every social institution, which is a creation of the people, every state, which belongs to the people, must be ruled according to a certain plan if it is to endure." It is self-evident how much this viewpoint agrees with our own. For by nature every living thing flees death and seeks its self-preservation. It is apparent that the chief point of civic wisdom is that those who are entrusted with the honor and authority of ruling the state should take care to maintain and preserve it, leading it daily toward ever greater perfection. Cicero describes for us in the same passage how this should take place: "this plan is always to be derived from the foundations on which the state was established". In those foundations are contained the source and origin of the inner life of which we speak. Thus the helmsman of a ship must know the difference between a warship and a merchantman. No one should control the rudder of a ship of state who does not completely know not only the nature of the sea in which he sails, but also the nature of his vessel. He who lacks this thorough knowledge would do better to take his hands off the wheel. For he would necessarily destroy the very institutions which he is supposed to preserve, scattering and extinguishing their life. I believe that only those who have achieved

the closest relationship and identity with the nature of the state which they represent can distinguish themselves in politics.

Up to now, dear listeners, we have considered separately the offices and limits of history and politics. It should not be hard to derive from this the connection which exists between the two, and to determine in what their relationship and distinction consist.

First, it is clear that the basis of both is one and the same. Just as there can be no politics which does not rest on a complete and exact knowledge of the state which is to be ruled – and that knowledge is inconceivable without knowing the events of past ages – and just as history incorporates this very knowledge, or attempts to comprehend it, so it is clear that in this matter both are most closely connected. I do not say that politics is impossible without a perfect historical understanding. For there is a critical use of human reason which likewise with divine inspiration can penetrate into the nature of things. Nor do I recommend a special type of education for those who would be suited for government. Rather, I shall try to probe the nature of the problem, unconcerned whether a carefully achieved education or a kind of prophetic intuition is better suited to reach those heights of which we spoke. It is, after all, the task of history to extract from past events the nature of the state and to bring us to an understanding of it; the task of politics, to carry on and develop it after recognition and understanding are successfully achieved. The knowledge of the past is incomplete without an acquaintance with the present; an understanding of the present is impossible without a knowledge of the past. They clasp one another's hands. One cannot exist, or be complete, without the other.

Nevertheless, I am not one of those who believe that nothing new should be allowed to take place. We know from experience how human nature is prone to error, how human affairs can easily take a turn for the worse. We see in order for life itself to continue to flow and progress that new enterprises are daily necessary, and that even storms can be essential. Political wisdom consists, I think, not so much in preservation as in progress and in growth. The human race lacks much of what it needs to grow toward its highest perfection. History itself would already have reached its limits, and achieved its eternal goals, if we did not wish to continue striving to reach these heights and summits.

This is, honored listeners, the relationship between history and politics as I conceive them. Both comprise at once a science and an art. As sciences they are most closely connected, though one is more concerned with the past, the other with the present and the future. As art they are much farther apart. History is based wholly on literature. Its task consists in renewing our vision of the way in which events have occurred, and human nature behaved, and in preserving the memory of them for all time. But politics belongs to practical affairs. It strives to hold men together through the bond of the state, to preserve their peace through the wisdom of law, to bind them in free consent to join together, so that they will behave properly in their private and public lives. History and politics differ from one another, just as do theoretical and practical philosophy. One is proper to the school and to retiring persons; the other is concerned with the market place, to disputes

and public strife; one is practiced more in shadow and the other in the light of day; one suffices simply to preserve, the other passes beyond preservation to the creation of something new.

I believe, esteemed listeners, that I have taken account of those who will object that there are aspects of politics which have nothing in common with history, yet are of the greatest importance. These consist in the natural laws affecting the state, not only the proper administration of field and forest, but also the way in which income is to be obtained and spent, how cities should be governed, courts held, laws given and enforced. In fact, I would not want to disparage a science which is also so rich in discernment, truth, and utility. Rather, I would see it as no less necessary for the state than medicine is for the human body. Human society forms its own body; political economy shows how the members of a state are closely bound to one another, and displays for us their arteries and veins, the location of their breathing and blood, and teaches in what the healthy functioning of the body politic consists, so that sickness can be healed or avoided. It is of such great importance that ignoring its prescriptions leads, not to the damage of one part, but to the destruction of all parts. Nonetheless, this statement does not weaken in the least our earlier argument. First of all, the historian no less than the politician requires an exact and ready familiarity with these things; the events which he studies are often the result of the health of the state. Secondly, the science of politics does not have such sufficient weight and regard that every political transaction must depend upon it. Just as a strong and healthy person will pay some heed to medical advice, but will hardly be so obedient to it that he will allow it to direct his whole life to the same extent as a sick person would, so it is with the healthy and wisely ordered state. It bases itself on the maxims of political economy and quietly observes them, but hardly remains so timidly tied to them that it does exactly only what their rules allow. It never renders them a slave-like obedience. The state keeps in sight other laws of higher significance, more comprehensive viewpoints which proceed from the drives of its own inner life, drawn from its spirit and heart, which allow mankind to play a part in divine freedom.

At this point in our discussion, we come to another distinction between the two closely related disciplines. History is by its nature universal. True, some do concentrate their efforts completely on their fatherland, narrowly conceived, on their own state, on one small dark corner of the earth. But this is more out of a certain prejudice or piety or a praiseworthy tendency toward careful work than from any intellectual forces deriving from the nature proper to the discipline. The latter consists in the conviction that nothing human can be alien to history, which aims to comprehend all centuries and all monarchies. It is quite different with the nature of politics, which always exists in relation to a given state, is exercised for the state's benefit, and, as such, is always restricted within certain limits. For who would attempt to govern by himself universally over every country? He would be fortunate indeed to understand how to administer one. Many are called to steer the ship of state; not a few are forced to abandon the rudder. This art of politics requires, if any does, keen understanding and the force of genius accompanying it to uncover and establish things. It requires courage and, if I am right, is the most difficult art of all.

And now let us return to our starting point.

The error of the philosophers of the last century was that they formulated a universal doctrine according to which every state must be ruled. They avoided the painstaking work of scholarship by which particulars could be discovered. They were so seized with disgust at the undeniable corruption which had established itself in public affairs that they convinced themselves that everything must be reformed according to the design for the best form of government. The different peoples were to receive one and the same law, and a common form of government was suggested. And so they attempted to do everything possible. They saw their role first as the weakening, dismantling, and destruction of their ancient institutions. From this, they proposed, were to follow general happiness and the return of a golden age. But soon they themselves came to realize that one cannot without penalty dislodge and bring into dispute the basic elements and origins on which human society is founded. They were taught that states possess a character of their own, which can be suppressed by force and violence, but which is not easily completely destroyed, and which can be resurrected. To their own personal regret, they opened the way for the greed and ambition of the worst men, who cleared the air at immeasurable expense to the human race, and even today, as in Spain, continue to bring calamity upon the government.

And now I turn to you, dear colleagues. History, whose professorship I have occupied for the last few years, and which I assume formally by today's celebration, has immeasurable good to offer to a healthy politics. It clears away errors and misunderstandings, which in our age affect the eyes of even the best men. A few remind us constantly that our own age can learn no lessons from history, still less derive our laws from it. They perceive things as too different, not only because of the extraordinary skills of craftsmen and factory owners and the spread of education to the lowest classes, but also because the general awareness and humanity of all classes surpass those of all previous ages. They appear great to themselves, so that they might ignore their fathers and forefathers. Others, in contrast, assure us that our age is the worst which has ever existed. They maintain that it lacks piety, religion, courage, and justice. They complain that it is so full of errors that it can hardly be improved. The one will accept only what is new and unheard of, since this alone will be suited to the changed character of the contemporary period. The other favors only what has been approved by the usage of antiquity and treads as closely as possible in the footsteps of his ancestors.

But history teaches us that every age has its own weakness for error and its own potential for virtue. We ought to proceed neither from doubt nor from pride and arrogance. We also learn that each age has its own given tasks, as does our own, and that we must attempt to perform them with effort and concern. Finally, we recognize not only that human affairs are neither guided by a blind, inevitable fate, nor steered by false visions, but that their successful conduct depends on virtue, understanding, and wisdom. I invite you, dear colleagues, to take this science to your hearts. May we follow the paths which it suggests, guided too by the fatherland, the examples of ancient and modern times, and, finally, the nature and necessity of things themselves.

Part III

The Prefaces

Ranke introduces each of his major works with a preface in which he briefly describes his sources and outlines his basic conception of the subject matter. We have chosen five of these prefaces that are of particular interest. In all of them Ranke reiterates his deep conviction concerning the relatedness of all national history to universal – or, more accurately, Western – history.

In the preface to the *Histories of the Latin and Germanic Peoples* (Selection 10) he explains his conception that the Germanic and Latin peoples form a unity much more meaningful historically than the geographic concept of Europe or the religious one of a Christian or a Roman Catholic civilization. The core of all modern history, he argues, is to be found in the histories of what he calls the Germanic and Latin peoples, and the book sets out to study the crucial years in the development of these nations which mark the beginnings of modern history.

In the preface to the *History of the Popes* (Selection 11) he observes that papal history must be seen as “a portion of general history, of the overall development of the world”. He is not interested in “petty details”, he explains, but rather in the great moving “forces of history and their results”.

What interests him in the history of the separate nations, he notes in the preface to the *History of England* (Selection 13), are “those epochs which have had the most effectual influence on the development of mankind”. He wishes to portray the crucial periods in which the unique character of the major nations was formed, whether the completion of absolutism in France or constitutionalism in England. This character, he points out in the preface to the *Universal History* (Selection 14), is never a product of nature, “an offspring of the soil and the race”, but rather of the great events through which the nations have passed.

Ranke’s often quoted statement that “every epoch is immediate to God” has been interpreted to mean that he regarded all phases of history to be of equal interest to the historian. The prefaces indicate that Ranke did not intend this meaning. Ranke clearly distinguished between epochs of greater and lesser interest to the historian. Not unlike Hegel, he is concerned only with periods of world historical significance. Similarly, he is interested only in the world historical peoples, which in the modern period populate the great European nations. His universal history is thus, strictly speaking, the history of Western civilization. The non-Western world, at least in the modern age, is of little interest to him.

Two sets of ideas that permeate all of Ranke's historical writings are expressed in the preface to the *Universal History*. 1) Universal history, Ranke warns, can never be merely a compilation of national histories. Rather, the history of the nations must be related to the broader course of world history. On the other hand, world history would deteriorate into mere fantasy and speculation were it to desert the firm ground of national history. 2) The history of civilization and culture, no matter how central to national and universal history, is in a sense less decisive to the development of world history than the "rivalry of nations engaged in conflict with each other for the possession of the soil or for political supremacy", which affects the whole realm of culture. Hence, Ranke's prime interest is politics and international relations.

Throughout the prefaces runs Ranke's faith that the historian who honestly confronts the documents can, as he explains in the preface to the *History of France* (Selection 12), attain "a view of the objective nature of the great facts ... free from the mutual accusations of the contemporaries and the often restricted view of their posterity".

The preface to the *Histories of the Latin and Germanic Peoples* has been translated by Wilma A. Iggers from the version appearing in the *Sämmtliche Werke*. The other prefaces are taken from the nineteenth century translations mentioned in the source notes at the beginning of each selection. These translations have been checked and revised for accuracy by the editors.

10 Preface to the First Edition of *Histories of the Latin and Germanic Peoples**

(October 1824)

The present book, I readily admit, seemed to me more perfect before it was printed than it does now that it is in print. However, I count on favorably inclined readers to pay less attention to its faults than to its possible virtues. Since I do not entirely trust it to make its own way, however, I shall preface it with a brief explanation about its purpose, subject, and form.

The intention of a historian depends on his viewpoint, about which two things must be said here. First of all, I regard the Latin and the Germanic Peoples as a unit. I reject three analogous concepts: one, the concept of a universal Christendom (which would embrace even the Armenians); two, the concept of the unity of Europe, for since the Turks are Asiatics and since the Russian Empire comprises the whole north of Asia, their situations could not be thoroughly understood without penetrating and drawing in the total Asian situation. Finally, my point of view also excludes the almost exactly analogous concept, that of a Latin Christendom. Slavic, Latvian, and Magyar tribes belonging to the latter have a peculiar and special nature which is not included here. The author remains close to home with the tribally related peoples of either purely Germanic or Germano-Latin origin, whose history is the nucleus of all recent history, and touches on what is foreign only in passing as something peripheral.

In the following introduction an attempt will be made to show, mainly by tracing the thread of foreign undertakings, to what extent these nations have evolved in unity and kindred movement. This is one aspect of the viewpoint on which this book is based. The other aspect is directly expressed by the content of the book, which embraces only a small part of the history of these nations, what might well be called the beginning of the modern history – only histories, not history. This book considers, on the one hand, the founding of the Spanish monarchy and the end of Italian freedom; on the other hand, the creation of a dual opposition, a political one by the French, an ecclesiastical one by the Reformation – in other words, the division of our nations into two hostile parts on which all our history rests. My account starts from the moment when Italy, united in herself, enjoyed at least external freedom and may perhaps be considered as a ruling force,

* From *Sämmtliche Werke*, XXII v–viii, translated by Wilma A. Iggers.

since she supplied the Pope. It seeks to portray the division of Italy, the invasion of the French and the Spaniards, the end in some states of all freedom and in others of self-determination, and finally the victory of the Spaniards and the beginning of their domination. Furthermore, my book starts with the political insignificance of the Spanish kingdoms and continues to their unification – to the alignment of the united kingdom against the infidels and its influence on the internal development of Christianity. It seeks to make clear how the struggle against the infidels led to the discovery of America and the conquest of great kingdoms there, but above all how the attempt to strengthen Christianity led to Spanish domination over Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands. Thirdly, my chronicle continues from the time when Charles VIII sets out in the vanguard of Christendom in its struggle against the Turks through all the changing fortunes and misfortunes of the French up to the time, forty-one years later, when Francis calls these very Turks to aid against the Emperor. Finally, in tracing the beginnings of the opposition of a political party in Germany against the Emperor and of an ecclesiastical party in Europe against the Pope, this chronicle seeks to pave the way for a more complete insight into the history of the great schism brought about by the Reformation. This very schism is to be observed in its early course. This book tries to comprehend in their unity all these and the other related histories of the Latin and Germanic Peoples. To history has been given the function of judging the past, of instructing men for the profit of future years. The present attempt does not aspire to such a lofty undertaking. It merely wants to show how it essentially was (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*).

But from what sources could this be newly investigated? The foundations of the present writing, the origins of its subject matter, are memoirs, diaries, letters, reports from embassies, and original narratives of eyewitnesses. Other writings were considered only when they seemed either to have been immediately deduced from the former or to equal them through some kind of original information. Every page shows which these works were; a second book to be published simultaneously with the present one will present the method of research and the critical results.

Form results from intent and subject matter. One cannot demand of a historical work the same free development which at least in theory is sought in a poetic work, and I do not know if one is right in believing such free development to have been found in the works of the Greek and Roman masters. Strict presentation of facts, no matter how conditional and unattractive they might be, is undoubtedly the supreme law. The development of the unity and progress of the events came next in order of importance. Therefore instead of starting, as might have been expected, with a general description of public conditions in Europe – which would have diffused, if not confused, my point of view – I preferred to discuss every people, every power, every individual in greater detail only at the moment when they appeared in a pronouncedly active or leading role. I was unconcerned about the fact that occasionally I had already mentioned them previously. For how could I avoid mentioning their existence? In this way the general line of their development, the direction they took, the ideas which motivated them could be grasped all the better.

Finally, what will be said of the treatment of particulars, which constitutes such an important part of historical work? Will it not often seem hard, fragmentary, colorless, tiring? There are noble models for this procedure, ancient ones and – let us not fail to recognize this – also modern ones. But I did not dare imitate them. Their world was different from mine. A lofty ideal does exist: to grasp the event itself in its human comprehensibility, its unity, and its fullness. It should be possible to attain this goal. I know how far I am from having achieved it. One tries, one strives, but in the end one has not reached the goal. Only let no one become impatient about this failure! The main thing is always what we deal with: as Jakobi says, our subject is mankind as it is, explicable or inexplicable, the life of the individual, of the generations, of the peoples, and at times the hand of God over them.

11 Preface to *History of the Popes*^{*}

(1834)

The power of Rome in the early years and Middle Ages is universally known; in modern times, Rome has also experienced a great epoch of rejuvenated dominance over the world. After the decline of her importance in the first half of the sixteenth century, she once more succeeded in becoming the center of faith and opinion of the Romanic nations of southern Europe, making bold and at times successful attempts to recover her dominion over those of the North.

This period of a revived church-temporal power – its renovation and internal development, its progress and decline – I intend to describe, at least in outline; an undertaking which, however imperfectly it may be performed, could never have been attempted had I not found opportunity to avail myself of certain materials hitherto unknown. My first duty is to give a general indication of these materials and their sources.

In an earlier work I have already stated the contents of our Berlin manuscripts; but Vienna is incomparably richer than Berlin in treasures of this kind.

Besides its essentially German character, Vienna possesses also an element more extensively European: the most diversified manners and languages meet in all classes, from the highest to the lowest, and Italy in particular is fully and vividly represented. Even the collections in this city present a comprehensiveness of character, attributable to the policy of the state and its geographical position: its ancient connection with Spain, Belgium, and Lombardy and its proximity to, and ecclesiastical relations with, Rome. The Viennese have from the earliest times displayed a taste for collecting, possessing, and preserving, whence it arises that even the original and purely national collections of the imperial library are of great value; to these, various foreign collections have since been added. A number of volumes similar to the Berlin *Informazioni* were purchased at Modena from the house of Rangone; from Venice were acquired the invaluable manuscripts of the Doge Marco Foscarini, including his materials for a continuation of his literary undertaking, the “Italian Chronicles”, of which no trace is elsewhere to be found; and the bequest of Prince Eugene added a rich collection of historical and political

* From *History of the Popes: Their Church and State*, trans. E. Fowler (new York, 1901), v–xi; revised by Konrad von Moltke.

manuscripts that had been gathered together, with comprehensive judgment, by that distinguished statesman. The reader is animated by feelings of pleasure and hope on examining the catalogues and perceiving in them the unexplored knowledge that will enable him to supply the deficiencies manifest in almost all printed works of modern history. A whole futurity of study! And at the distance of a few steps only, Vienna presents literary support still more important. The Imperial Archives contain, as might be expected, the most authentic and valuable records for the elucidation of German history in general, but particularly also of Italian history. It is true that the greater part of the Venetian archives have been restored, after many wanderings, to Venice; but there still remains in Vienna a mass of Venetian manuscripts far from unimportant: dispatches, in the original or as copies, and abstracts thereof made for the use of the state, called "Rubricaries"; reports which, in many instances, are the only copies extant; official registers of public functionaries, chronicles, and diaries. The reports relating to Gregory XIII and Sixtus V are for the most part derived from the archives of Vienna. I cannot sufficiently praise the unconditional liberality with which I was permitted to have access to these.

And perhaps I ought here to particularize the many and various aids afforded me in furtherance of my work, both at home and abroad; but I feel restrained by a scruple (whether well-founded or not, I am unable to decide) that I should have to mention so many names, some of them of great eminence, as would give my gratitude the appearance of vainglory – and a work that has every reason to present itself modestly might assume an air of pretension ill suited to its purposes.

Next to Vienna, my attention was principally directed to Venice and Rome.

It was formerly the most invariable practice of great houses in Venice to form a cabinet of manuscripts as an adjunct to the library. It was in the nature of things that these would relate principally to the affairs of the republic. They represent the part taken by the respective families in public affairs and were preserved as records and memorials of the house for the instruction of its younger members. Some of these private collections still remain, and I had access to several; but much the larger number were destroyed in the general ruin of 1797 or since then. If more have been preserved than might have been expected, the gratitude of the world is due chiefly to the librarians of St. Mark, who labored to save from the universal wreck whatever the utmost resources of their institution would permit them to secure. Accordingly this library possesses a considerable store of manuscripts, indispensable to the history of the city and state, and which are even valuable aids toward that of Europe. But the inquirer must not expect too much from it: it is a somewhat recent acquisition gathered, almost at random, from private collections, incomplete and without unity of plan. It is not to be compared with the riches of the State archives, especially as these are now arranged. I have already given a sketch of the Venetian archives in my inquiry into the conspiracy of 1618 and will not repeat what I there said. For my Roman investigations the reports of the ambassadors returning from Rome were above all desirable; but I had good reason to use other collections for this study, because gaps are always unavoidable, and these archives must necessarily have sustained losses in their

many wanderings. In different places I gathered together forty-eight reports relating to Rome, the oldest dating from the year 1500. Nineteen were of the sixteenth century and twenty-one of the seventeenth century; these formed an almost complete series, having only a few breaks here and there. Of the eighteenth century there were, it is true, only eight, but these, too, were very instructive and welcome. In the majority of cases I saw and used the originals. They contained a great number of interesting observations derived from immediate experience that would otherwise have been lost with the passing of contemporaries. These first gave me hopes of a coherent narrative.

It will be obvious that Rome alone could supply the means for verifying and extending these materials.

But was it to be expected that a foreigner, and one professing a different faith, would there be permitted to have free access to the public collections for the purpose of revealing the secrets of the papacy? This would not perhaps have been so ill-advised as it may appear since no research can bring to light anything worse than what is already assumed by unfounded conjecture and received by the world as established truth. But I cannot boast of having had any such experience. I was enabled to take cognizance of the treasures contained in the Vatican and to use a number of volumes suited to my purpose; but the freedom of access which I could have wished was by no means accorded.

Fortunately, however, other collections were thrown open to me from which I could acquire information, which, if not complete, was nonetheless very extensive and authentic. In the times of flourishing aristocracy, more particularly in the seventeenth century, it was customary throughout Europe for the great families who had administered the affairs of state to retain possession of some of the public documents. This practice prevailed in Rome to a greater extent, perhaps, than in any other state. The reigning kinsmen of the pontiff, who in all ages exercised considerable power, usually bequeathed a large part of the state papers accumulated during their administration to the perpetual possession of the princely houses they founded. These constituted a part of the family endowments. In the palaces which they erected, a few rooms, usually in the upper part of the building, were always reserved for books and manuscripts, to which each succeeding generation contributed. Thus, to a certain extent the private collections of Rome may be regarded as the public ones, as the archives of state were dispersed among the descendants of reigning houses without any objection being made to the practice, much in the same manner as the redundancy of public wealth was suffered to flow into the coffers of the papal kindred; and certain private galleries, such as the Borghese or Doria, became greatly superior to the Vatican both in extent and historical importance, though the latter is distinguished by its selection of masterpieces. The manuscripts preserved in the Barberini, Chigi, Altieri, Albani, and Corsini palaces are accordingly of inestimable value for the aid they give toward a history of the popes, their State, and their Church. The State archives, recently established, are particularly important for their collection of registers illustrative of the Middle Ages; part of the history of this period still awaits a discoverer here; but, as far as my knowledge extends, I do not believe that much

is to be gained from it for later centuries. Its value is small, unless I have been purposely deceived, when compared with the wealth and magnificence of private collections. Each of these comprises, as may be readily supposed, the papers of that epoch in which the pope of the family reigned; but as the kindred of each pontiff usually retained an eminent station; as men are in general desirous of extending and completing a collection once begun, and as opportunities were frequent in Rome, from the literary traffic in manuscripts established there; so the whole of these private collections possess many valuable documents illustrating other periods, both proximate and remote. The richest of all (in consequence of important bequests) is the Barberiniana; that of the Corsini Palace has been remarkable from its commencement for the care and judgment with which it has been formed.

I was fortunate enough to be permitted to use all these collections, as well as others of less importance, and in some instances with unrestricted freedom. An unexpected harvest of authentic and suitable materials thus lay before me as, for example: the correspondence of the nuncios with the instructions given to them and the reports which were brought back; detailed biographies of several popes, written with greater freedom because they were not intended for the public; accounts of the lives of distinguished cardinals; official and private journals; discussions of particular circumstances and transactions; memoranda and deliberations; reports on the administration of the provinces, their trade and manufactures; statistical tables and accounts of receipts and disbursements. These documents, for the most part entirely unknown, were prepared by men acquainted with their subject in practical terms and were of a credibility which, though it does not supersede the necessity for a searching and critical examination, is equal to that usually accorded to the testimony of well-informed contemporaries. The oldest of these manuscripts of which I made use related to the conspiracy of the Porcari against Nicholas V. Of other manuscripts on the fifteenth century I met with only a few, but on entering the sixteenth century, they became more numerous and more comprehensive at every step. Through the whole course of the seventeenth century, during which so little is known with certainty respecting Rome, they afford information all the more valuable because of its previous dearth. After the commencement of the eighteenth century, the documents decrease in number and intrinsic value; but at that time the Roman State and Court had already lost much of their influence and importance. I shall discuss these Roman manuscripts, as well as the Venetian, in detail at the end of the work, and will there note whatever I may find deserving attention, and which I could not well introduce in the course of the narrative. The large mass of materials, both manuscript and printed, lying before me renders a stringent condensation indispensable.

An Italian or Roman, a Catholic, would undertake the subject in a very different manner. Through expressions of personal veneration – or, perhaps, in the present state of opinion, of personal hatred – he would give to his work a peculiar, and, no doubt, more brilliant coloring; on many points he would be more elaborate, more ecclesiastical, more local. In these respects a Protestant, a North German, cannot

be expected to compete with him. He regards the papal power with feelings of more indifference and must, from the first, renounce that warmth of expression which arises from partiality or hostility and which might, perhaps, produce a certain impression in Europe. In the last resort, we lack the true sympathy for such matters of ecclesiastical or canonical detail; on the other hand, our position affords us different – and, if I am not mistaken, more purely historical – perspectives. For what is there in the present day that can make the history of the papal power of importance to us? Not its particular relation to ourselves; for it no longer exercises any essential influence, nor does it create in us solicitude of any kind; the times are past in which we had anything to fear; we now feel ourselves perfectly secure. It must be its world historical development and influence. The papal power was, however, not so unchangeable as is commonly supposed. If we consider the question apart from those principles upon which its existence depends and which it cannot abandon without consigning itself to destruction, we shall find it affected, quite as deeply as any other government and to the very essence of its being, by the various destinies to which the nations of Europe have been subjected. As the history of the world has varied; as one nation or another has gained the ascendancy; as the fabric of social life has been disturbed; so also has the papal power been affected. Its maxims, its objectives, and its pretensions have undergone essential changes, and its influence, above all, has been subjected to the greatest variations. If we consider the long list of names so frequently repeated through successive ages, from Pius I in the second century to our contemporaries, Pius VII and VIII, in the nineteenth, we receive an impression of uninterrupted stability; but we must not permit ourselves to be misled. The popes of different periods are, in fact, distinguished by differences as strongly marked as those existing between the various dynasties of a kingdom. To us who are outsiders, these mutations present the most interesting subject of contemplation. We see in them a portion of general history, of the overall development of the world; and this is true not only of periods when Rome held undisputed rule but also, and perhaps even more remarkably, of those periods shaken by the conflicting forces of action and counteraction, such as the times which the present work is intended to encompass – the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – times when the papacy was menaced and endangered, yet maintained and fortified itself, nay, even re-extended its influence, striding onward for a period but at last receding again and tottering to its fall; times in which the mind of the western nations was pre-eminently occupied by ecclesiastical questions and when the power, which, abandoned and assailed by one party, was upheld and defended with fresh zeal by the other, necessarily assumed a great universal importance. It is from this point of view that our natural position invites us to consider this history, and this I will now attempt.

I think it appropriate to commence by recalling to the memory of my reader the situation of the papal power in the beginning of the sixteenth century and the course of events which led thereto.

12 Preface to *History of France**

(1852)

As a German I venture to say a word upon the history of France. Great peoples and states have a double character – one national and the other in the context of world history. Their history, in a similar manner, presents a twofold aspect. So far as it forms an essential feature in the development of humanity generally or records a prevailing influence exercised upon that development, it awakens a curiosity which extends far beyond the limits of nationality; it attracts the attention and becomes an object of study even to those who are not natives of the lands whose story is narrated.

Perhaps the main difference between the Greek authors who have treated the history of ancient Rome in its flourishing period and the Romans themselves consists in the fact that the Greeks have regarded the subject as it affected the whole world while the Romans have looked at it nationally. The object is the same: the writers differ in the positions from which they view the history, but together they inform posterity.

Among modern nations none has exercised a more manifold and enduring influence upon others than the French. It has been said that the history of France – at least that of modern times – is the history of Europe. I am myself very far from sharing this opinion. France has by no means shut herself off from the impulses springing out of the four great civilized nations of Europe by whom she is surrounded. From Italy she has received literary and artistic culture. The chief founders of her monarchy in the seventeenth century took Spain for their model. The tendencies of religious reform were derived from Germany and those of political reform from the example of England.

It is, however, indisputable that the general ferment, at least throughout the Continent, has for a long period risen principally in France. The French have always taken the liveliest interest in the great problem of the State and the Church, expounding it to all others with a peculiar power of expression; it has ever been their manner to centralize the free impulses of the intellect, so to speak, and to

* From *Civil Wars and Monarchy in France in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century: A History of France Principally During That Period*, trans. M. A. Garvey (London: R. Bentley, 1852), pp.i–v. Revised by Georg G. Iggers and Konrad von Moltke.

give a practical application to theory, once conceived. But the realm of opinion is not the only one in which they have sought to rule. Ambitious, warlike, and incited by feelings of national pride, they have kept their neighbors in a state of constant excitement and armed exercise, for causes springing from the claims of their system – or even without them; assuming now an attitude defiant and aggressive, now one of defense against actual or imaginary dangers; sometimes liberating the oppressed, still more frequently oppressing the free. There have occasionally been epochs in which the national history of France has, through the importance of the events whose occurrence it details and the extent of their operation, acquired in itself a world historical character.

Such an epoch is that which I have undertaken to depict in the following pages.

Personalities like those of Francis I, Catherine de' Medici and her sons, Admiral Coligny, the two Guises, the great Bourbon Henry IV, Maria de' Medici, Richelieu, Mazarin, and Louis XIV belong as much to universal history as to that of France. All these personages, whether distinguished by great and good qualities or by the opposite, derive their distinctive character from their relationship to the politico-religious contest that extended generally through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This contest did not arise so much from the conflict of the two doctrines (for within the boundaries of France neither on the one side nor the other was there much addition made) as it did from their relationship to the state and to the parties struggling for power. The supreme authority was often disputed and nearly overwhelmed; it was limited less by law than by insubordinate threatenings, until at length by inconceivable efforts it secured and fortified itself, and the kingship arose from amidst all the storms which assailed it in a fullness of power such as royalty had never before attained in any Romanic German nation. The phenomenon of absolute monarchy in itself – the imitation it excited, its pretensions and enterprises, and the resistance it called forth – made France for a long period the central point of the movements which agitated Europe and the world.

Much has been written on the history of this epoch, but to me it appears that the appropriate conception of the times has scarcely been appreciated. The contemporary writings carry in their vivid coloring the impress of the moment in which each originated; they are for the most part imbued with the peculiar views of parties or of private individuals. Learned Frenchmen have long remarked how insecure the foundation is upon which traditional history, which has been formed since Mézeray's times, and the manner in which Sismondi has extended it, is based. In a few instances this traditional authority has been departed from, but on the whole it has been submitted to.

For a closer examination of the truth of facts, I have found of the greatest value the original documentary matter published in France during the last ten years as well as that which has appeared in the Netherlands and in Italy, none of which has ever before been used. As before, I could again draw largely on un-printed documents: Italian "Relations" from the Venetian ambassadors and the papal nuncios at Paris to their respective courts, extending over the whole period; Spanish and English correspondence relating to some of the most important years.

the former having reference to the sixteenth century, the latter to the seventeenth century; letters and proclamations of French kings and statesmen; rolls of the Estates and records of the parliamentary debates; diplomatic communications and many other original sources of information, much of which deserves to be published in its entirety. These documents have given me valuable information at all times and have not infrequently determined my historical convictions. I may take another opportunity to give a detailed account of them. They are to be found not in the French and English libraries alone but also in the archives of Italy, Germany, and Belgium – for all took an interest in that which affected all.

I have not desired, even had I been able, to produce a history arranged according to the models of the ancient and modern masters of narrative for such a work would require a whole life devoted to the uninterrupted study of the archives of France and neighboring countries. I was content to convince myself of having achieved a view of the objective nature of the great facts on the basis of original and reliable reports, free from the mutual accusations of the contemporaries and the often restricted view of their posterity. I have not devoted much space to less significant events; but this has enabled me to pay the greater attention to those of world-historical importance.

I am convinced that a historical work may also derive its internal logic from the intentions of the author and the nature of the task.

13 Preface to *History Of England*^{*}

(1859)

Once more I come forward with a work on the history of a nation which is not mine by birth.

It is the ambition of all nations which enjoy a literary culture to possess a harmonious and vivid narrative of their own past history. And it is of inestimable value to any people to obtain such a narrative, which shall comprehend all epochs, be true to fact and, while resting on thorough research, yet be attractive to the reader; for by this it would attain to a perfect self-consciousness and, feeling the pulsation of its life throughout the story, become fully acquainted with its own origin and growth and character. But we may doubt whether up to this time works of such an import and compass have ever been produced, and even whether they can ever be written. For who could apply learned research, such as the progress of study now renders necessary, to the mass of materials already collected without being lost in its immensity? Who again could possess the vivid susceptibility requisite for doing justice to the several epochs, for appreciating the actions, the modes of thought, and the moral standard of each of them, and for understanding their relations to universal history? We must be content in this area, as well as in others, if we can but approximate to the ideal we set up. The best-written histories will be accounted the best.

When then an author undertakes to make the past life of a foreign nation the object of a comprehensive literary work, he will not think of writing its national history. This would be a contradiction in terms. In accordance with his natural vantage point he will direct his attention to those epochs which have had the most effectual influence on the development of mankind; only so far as is necessary for the comprehension of these will he introduce anything that precedes or comes after them.

There is an especial charm in following, century after century, the history of the English nation, in considering the antagonism of the elements out of which it is composed and its share in the fortunes and enterprises of that great community of

^{*} From *History of England, Principally in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. C. W. Boase, G. W. Kitchin, *et al.*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875) I. v–xiv. Revised by Konrad von Moltke and Georg G. Iggers.

western peoples to which it belongs; but it will be readily granted that no other period can be compared in universal importance with the epoch of those religious and political wars which fill the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In the sixteenth century the part which England took in the work of emancipating the world from the rule of the western hierarchy decisively influenced not only her own constitution but also the success of the ecclesiastical deviation throughout Europe. In England the monarchy perfectly understood its position in relation to this great renewal: while favoring the movement in its own interest, it nevertheless contrived to maintain the old historical state of things to a great extent. Nowhere have more of the institutions of the Middle Ages been retained than in England; nowhere did the spiritual power link itself more closely with the temporal. Here less depends on the conflict of doctrines, for which the classic ground is elsewhere; the main interest lies in the political transformation, accomplished amidst manifold variations of opinions, tendencies, and events, and attended at last by a war for the very existence of the nation. For it was against England that the sacerdotal reaction directed its main attack. To withstand it the country was forced to ally itself with the kindred elements on the Continent; the successful resistance of England was in turn of the greatest service to them. The maintenance of Protestantism in Western Europe, on the Continent as well as in Britain, was effected by the united powers of both. To bring out clearly this alternate action it would not be advisable to lay weight on every temporary foreign relation, on every step of the home administration, and to search out men's personal motives in them; a shorter sketch may be best suited to show the chief characters as well as the main purport of the events in their full light.

But then, through the connection of England with Scotland and the accession of a new dynasty, a state of things ensued under which the continuance of the position taken up in domestic and foreign politics was rendered doubtful. The question arose whether the policy of England would not differ from that of Great Britain and be compelled to give way to it. The attempt to decide this question and the reciprocal influence of the newly allied countries brought on conflicts at home which, though mainly arising out of foreign relations, for a long while threw those relations into the background.

If we were required to express in the most general terms the distinction between English and French policy in the last two centuries, we might say that it consisted in this: that the glory of their arms abroad lay nearest to the heart of the French nation, and the legal settlement of their domestic affairs to that of the English. How often have the French, in appearance at least, allowed themselves to be consoled for the defects of the home administration by a great victory or an advantageous peace! And the English, with a concern for constitutional questions of apparently inferior importance, have not seldom turned their eyes away from grievous perils which hung over Europe.

The two great constitutional powers in England, the Crown and the Parliament, dating back as they did to the origins of the nation, had often previously contended with each other but had harmoniously combined in the religious struggle and had both gained strength thereby; but toward the middle of the seventeenth century

we see them first come into collision over ecclesiastical regulations and then engage in a war for life and death respecting the constitution of the realm. Originally disparate elements unite in attacking the monarchy; meanwhile, the old system breaks up, and energetic efforts are made to found a new one on its ruins. But none of them succeeds; the deeply felt need of a life regulated by law and able to trust its own future is not satisfied; after long storms men seek safety in a return to the old and approved forms so characteristic of Germanic and especially of English historical life. But in this there is clearly no solution of the original controversies, no reconciliation of the conflicting elements. Within narrower limits new discords break out that once more threaten a complete overthrow until, thanks to the indifference shown by England to continental events, the most formidable dangers arise to threaten the equilibrium of Europe and to menace even England herself. These European emergencies, coinciding with the troubles at home, bring about a new change of the old forms in the Revolution of 1688, the result of which is that the center of gravity of public authority in England shifts decisively to the parliamentary side. It was during this same time that France had won military and political superiority over all her neighbors on the mainland and in connection with it had concentrated an almost absolute power at home in the hands of the monarchy. England, thus reorganized, now set herself to contest the political superiority of France in a long and bloody war during which the contrast of polity came also into play; and while the first of these bore sway over the rest of Europe, the other attained to complete realization in its island-home and called forth at a later time, when the Continent was torn by civil strife, manifold imitations on the Continent also. Between these differing tendencies, these opposite poles, the life of Europe has ever since vibrated from side to side.

When we contemplate the framework of the earth, those heights which testify to the inherent energy of the original and active elements attract our special notice; we admire the massive mountains which overhang and dominate the lowlands covered with the settlements of man. So also in the domain of history are we attracted by epochs during which the elemental forces, whose joint action or tempered antagonism are the foundations of states and kingdoms, rise in sudden war against each other and amidst the surging sea of troubles heave up into the light new formations that give to subsequent ages their special character. Such a historic region, dominating the world, is formed by that epoch of English history to which these studies have been devoted, whose results I venture to publish in the present work; its importance is as great where it directly touches on the universal interests of humanity as where, on its own special ground, it develops itself apart in obedience to its inner impulses. To comprehend this period we must approach it as closely as possible: in all its general and individual spiritual life. We discern how great antagonistic principles sprang almost unavoidably out of earlier times, how they came into conflict, wherein the strength of each side lay, what caused the alternations of success, and how the final decisions were brought about; but at the same time we perceive how much, for themselves, for the great interests they represented, and for the enemies they subdued, depended on the

character, the energy, and the conduct of individuals. Were the men equal to the situation, or were not circumstances stronger than they? It is from this conflict of the universal with the particular that the great catastrophes arise; yet, it sometimes happens that the impulses which seem to perish with their authors exercise a more lasting influence on the progress of events than does the power of the conqueror. In the agonizing struggles of men's minds appear ideas and designs which pass beyond what is desirable: these find a place and a future in the colonies, the settlement of which is closely connected with the struggle at home. We are far from intending to involve ourselves in juridical and constitutional controversies; nor shall we distribute censure and praise according to what prevailed at a later time or at the moment, much less according to personal sympathies; our only concern is to recognize the great moving forces and their results. And yet how can we help but recognize manifold coincidences with that conflict of opinions and tendencies in which we are involved at the present day? But it is no part of our plan to follow these out. Momentary resemblances often mislead the politician who seeks a sure foothold in the past, as well as the historian who seeks it in the present. The Muse of history has the widest intellectual horizon and the full courage of her convictions; but in forming them she is thoroughly conscientious and, we might say, jealously bent on her duty. To introduce the interests of the present time into the work of the historian usually ends in restricting its free execution.

This epoch has been already often treated of, if not as a whole then certainly in detached parts, and that by nearly the best English historical writers. A native author has this great advantage over foreigners: that he thinks in the language in which the persons of the drama spoke and lets them be seen through no strange medium, but simply in their natural idiom. But when, too, this language is employed in rare perfection, as in a work of our own time (I refer not merely to rounded sentences and euphony of cadence but to the spirit of the narrative so much in harmony with our present culture and the tone of our minds and to the style which by every happy word excites our vivid sympathy), when we have before us a description of the events in the native language with all its attractive traits and broad coloring, based on an old familiar acquaintance with the country and its condition – then it would be folly to pretend to rival such a work in its own peculiar sphere. But the results of original study may lead us to form a different conception of the events. And it is surely good that in epochs of such great importance for the history of all nations we should possess foreign and independent representations to compare with those of home growth; in the latter are expressed sympathies and antipathies as inherited by tradition and affected by the antagonism of literary differences of opinion. Moreover, there will be a difference between these foreign representations. French histories, as in one famous instance, will hold more to the constitutional point of view and look for instruction or example in political doctrine. The German will labor (after investigation into original documents) to comprehend each event as a political and religious whole and, at the same time, to view it in its universal historical relations. I can in this case, as

in others, add something new to what is already known, and this to a larger extent as the work goes on.[†]

In no nation has so much documentary matter been collected for its later history as in England. The leading families which have taken part in public affairs and the different parties which wished to assert their views not only in the decisions but also in their historical representation have done much to promote this; more recently, the government also has exerted itself. Yet the existing publications are far from sufficient. How incredibly deficient our knowledge still is of even the most important parliamentary transactions! In the rich collections of the Record Office and of the British Museum I have sought and found much that was unknown and which I needed for obtaining an insight into events. The labor spent on it is richly compensated by the gain such labor brings; over the originals, so injured and so hard to decipher, linger the spirits of that long-past age. Special attention is due to the almost complete series of pamphlets of the time which the Museum possesses. As we read them, there are years in which we are present, as it were, at the public discussion that went on concerning the most important questions of government and public life, at least in the capital city, from month to month, from week to week.

If anyone has ever attempted to reconstruct for himself a portion of the past from materials of this kind – from original documents, and party writings which, prompted by hate or personal friendship, are intended for defense or attack, and yet are withal exceedingly incomplete – he will have felt the need of other contemporary notices, going into detail but free from such party views. A rich harvest of such independent reports has been supplied to me for this, as well as for my other works, by the archives of the ancient Republic of Venice. The “Relations”, which the ambassadors of the Republic were wont to draw up on their return home, invaluable though they are in reference to persons and the state of affairs in general, are not, however, sufficient to supply a detailed and consecutive account of events. But the Venetian archives possess also a long series of continuous reports which place us, as it were, in the very midst of the courts, the capitals, and the daily course of public business. For the sixteenth century they are preserved only in a very fragmentary state as regards England; for the seventeenth they lie before us, with gaps no doubt here and there, yet in much greater completeness. Even in the first volume they have been useful to me in Mary Tudor’s reign and the end of Elizabeth’s; in the later ones, not only for James I’s times but also far more for Charles I’s government and his quarrel with

[†] Note to the third edition: In the course of my researches for this work the representation of the seventeenth century has occupied a larger space than I at first thought I should have been able to give it; it forms the chief portion of the book in its present form. I have therefore allowed myself the unwonted liberty of altering the title so as to make this clear. Still the representation of the sixteenth century, which is not now mentioned in the title, has not been abridged on this account. The history of the Stuart dynasty and of William III make up the central part of the edifice; what is given to the earlier as well as the later times may, if I may be allowed the comparison, correspond to its two wings.

the Parliament. Owing to the geographical distance of Venice from England and her neutral position in the world, her ambassadors were able to devote an attention to English affairs which is free from all interested motives and sometimes to observe their general course in close communication with the leading men. We could not compose a history from the reports they give, but, combined with the documentary materials, these reports form a very welcome supplement to our knowledge.

Ambassadors who have to manage matters of all kinds, great and small, at the courts to which they are accredited, fill their letters with accounts of affairs which often contain little instruction for posterity, and they judge a man according to the support which he gives to their interests. This is the case with the French as well as with other ambassadors in England. Nevertheless their correspondence becomes gradually of the greatest value for any work. Their importance grows with the importance of affairs. The two courts entered into the most intimate relations: French politicians ceaselessly endeavored to gain influence over England, and sometimes with success. The ambassadors' letters at such times refer to the sum of weighty matters of state and become invaluable; they rise to the rank of the most important and instructive historical monuments. They have been hitherto, in great part, unused.

In the Roman and Spanish reports also I found much which deserves to be made known to the readers of history. The papers of Germany and the Netherlands proved still more productive, as I show in detail at the end of the narrative.

A historical work may aim either at putting forward a new view of what is already known or at communicating additional information as to the facts. I have endeavored to combine both these aims.

14 Preface to *Universal History**

(1880)

The earth had become habitable and was inhabited, the nations had separated and had established manifold relations with each other; they possessed the rudiments of civilization long before writing, on which history is totally dependent, had been invented. The province of history is limited by the means at her command, and the historian would be overbold who should venture to unveil the mystery of the primeval world, the relation of mankind to God and nature. The solution of such problems must be left to natural science and religious thought.

From this primeval world we pass to the monuments of a period less distant but still inconceivably remote, the vestibule, as it were, of History. These monuments have hitherto excited the admiration and defied the intelligence of successive generations, but during the last hundred years we have obtained more accurate information and a clearer understanding of them than were possessed before. In our own day the ruins of buried cities have been disinterred, and buildings have been discovered on the walls of which the mightiest monarchs of their day caused their deeds to be inscribed. Archaeological investigation is now everywhere pursued with a sort of filial affection, while art and antiquity have become almost identical conceptions. These monuments of the past are naturally connected with the relics, unfortunately all too fragmentary, of the ancient religions, rituals, and constitutions which have survived to our time. Around the various areas of investigation have grown up fields of study, each of which forms a department by itself and demands the devoted attention of a lifetime. Lastly, a universal science of language has arisen, which, based upon knowledge as intricate as it is extensive, undertakes with success the task of distinguishing and contrasting the relationships among the nations.

For the direction of all who are interested in these researches as well as for the instruction of the public at large, nothing could be more desirable than a scientific synopsis and correlation of these fields of study. Such a work would fittingly adorn an encyclopedia of historical knowledge, but it cannot be introduced into *Universal History*, which claims as its province only the ascertained results of

* From *Universal History, The Oldest Historical Group of Nations and the Greeks*, ed., G. W. Prothero (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1884) pp.xi–xiv. Revised by Georg G. Iggers.

historical research. History first begins at the point where monuments become intelligible and documentary evidence of a trustworthy character is forthcoming, but from this point onward her domain is boundless. Universal History, as we understand the term, embraces the events of all times and nations, with this limitation only: that they shall be so far ascertained as to make a scientific treatment of them possible.

The historians of bygone days were satisfied with the conception of the four great empires of the world, drawn from the prophetic books of the Bible. As late as the seventeenth century this conception prevailed, but in the eighteenth it was upset by the general progress (*Fortgang*) of public life. Through the revolution in ideas which then took place the notion of Universal History was, as it were, secularized – a result chiefly due to the publication of a voluminous record of different countries under the title of a “Universal History” which, appearing in England, was welcomed by German scholars and incited the latter to a display of similar industry.

But it was impossible to remain content with the history of individual nations. A collection of national histories, whether on a larger or a smaller scale, is not what we mean by Universal History, for in such a work the general connection of things is liable to be obscured. To recognize this connection, to trace the sequence of those great events which link all nations together and control their destinies, is the task which the science of Universal History undertakes. That such a connection exists a glance is sufficient to show.

The first beginnings of culture belong to an epoch whose secrets we are unable to decipher, but its development is the most universal phenomenon of those times concerning which trustworthy tradition is available. Its nature cannot be expressed completely by any one word. Culture embraces both religious and political life, the foundations of law and of society.

From time to time the institutions of one or another of the Oriental nations, inherited from primeval times, have been regarded as the germ from which all civilization has sprung. But the nations whose characteristic is eternal repose form a hopeless starting point for one who would understand the internal movement of Universal History. The nations can be regarded in no other connection than in that of the mutual action and reaction involved by their successive appearance on the stage of history and their combination into one progressive community.

Culture or civilization, by whichever name we choose to call it, contains one of the most powerful motives of their internal development. If we were to forecast a definite aim for their development, we would obscure the future and misunderstand the limitless scope of the movement of Universal History. The limits of historical inquiry confine our attention to the various phases in which this element appears, side by side with the opposition each of its forms encounters from the inborn peculiarities of the different nations and tribes with whom it comes in contact and who, too, have their original rights and an impregnable inner core.

But historical development does not alone rest on the tendency toward civilization. It arises also from impulses of a very different kind, especially from the rivalry of nations engaged in conflict with each other for the possession of the

soil or for political supremacy. It is in and through this conflict, which always also affects the domains of culture, that the great powers of history are formed. In their unceasing struggle for dominion the peculiar characteristics of each nation are modified by universal tendencies, but at the same time resist and react upon them.

Universal History would degenerate into mere fantasy and speculation were it to desert the firm ground of national history, but just as little can it afford to cling to this ground alone. The history of mankind manifests itself within the history of the nations themselves. There is a general historical life that moves progressively from one nation or group of nations to another. In the conflict between the different national groups Universal History comes into being, and the nationalities become conscious of themselves, for nations are not entirely products of nature. Nationalities so powerful and distinct as the English or the Italian are not so much the offspring of the soil and the race as of the great events through which they have passed.

But what does it require to investigate and to understand the universal life of mankind and the peculiarities of at least the more prominent nations? In this attempt the laws of historical criticism, called for in every detailed inquiry, may on no account be neglected, for it is only the results of critical investigation which can be dignified with the title of history at all. Our gaze must indeed be always fixed on the universal, but from false premises false conclusions would be drawn. Critical inquiry, on the one hand, and intelligent synthesis can only but support each other.

In conversations with intimate friends I have often discussed the question whether it would be possible to write a Universal History on such principles as these. We came to the conclusion that perfection was not attainable but that it was nonetheless necessary to make the attempt.

Such an attempt I now lay before the public. My point of view throughout has been the following:

In the course of centuries the human race has won for itself a sort of heirloom in the material and social progress which it has made, but still more in its religious development. One portion of this heritage, the most precious jewel of the whole, consists of those immortal works of genius in poetry and literature, in science and art, which, while they originated under local conditions, yet represent what is common to all mankind. With this possession are inseparably combined the memories of the events, the institutions, and the great men of the past. One generation hands on this tradition to another, which may again and again be revived and recalled to the minds of men, as I have the courage and confidence to do.

Part IV

History of the Popes

The *History of the Popes* offers a prime example of Ranke's historiography. It reflects his concern to relate the history with which he is dealing to the broader context of universal history, in fact the history of the Western world. As he stated again and again in his Prefaces, his interest in the history of nations not his own was based on their importance for all of European history. The papacy, while not a nation, in Ranke's eyes still in the early modern period exerted a significant influence on European history which, however, subsequently declined with the transition to modern religious outlooks and new political conditions. Moreover, the role of religion as a political force in history was a question of lasting interest to Ranke. Thus everything tended to lead him to a study of the papacy, not for its own sake, but for the religious idea it represented and as an important force on the European scene.

We have selected two chapters that reflect particularly well Ranke's approach to history. These chapters deal with a period and a theme crucial to Ranke's histories: the transformation in the sixteenth century of religion and of international relations – for Ranke the two are closely interrelated. Specifically, the chapters deal with the rise of Protestantism but also with the revitalization of Catholicism in the counter-reformation after it had previously lost its religious and moral standards. This religious reorientation is seen in a political context in which the system of the great powers is born, in this case marked by the struggle between the French and the Habsburg monarchies for control of Italy along with the decline of the previously autonomous city states and the papacy as decisive political factors in Italy. These sets of events reflect the “tendencies” which Ranke sees operating in history. Yet the chapters also show that these very “tendencies” do not reduce the course of history to a predetermined scheme. A voluntaristic element enters into the decisions and actions of individuals at the center of power, primarily the popes and the monarchs, who bring a personal note into play that affects the direction in which history moves.

The two chapters also demonstrate the centrality of narratives in Ranke's histories. Contrary to what many historians at the turn to the twentieth century maintained, Ranke did not only write for specialists and professional scholars but also for a broad educated public.

Even a cursory reading of the *History of the Popes* will reveal a number of

underlying principles of Ranke's narratives. The most important is the dramatic. The desire to enliven his account in the interest of better portrayal has led him to emphasize the fluctuations in the fortunes of Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth century. Occasionally the dramatic narrative becomes melodramatic. Repeatedly Ranke introduces statements intended to advance the flow of the narrative. They are essential to the portrayal, because they always reflect the deeper unity of the whole topic. The result of this technique in writing history is a coherent account of the history of the popes. It is the narrative which achieves this coherence.

The following text from Ranke's *History of the Popes*, with minor changes, is based on the translation by E. Fowler in the edition of 1901. All editing took the form of simple cutting; deletions made in the original are maintained: asterisks (*) indicate short deletions and daggers (†) longer ones. We have elected to use E. Fowler's translation in spite of certain differences with contemporary usage, as it in some ways reflects the quality of Ranke's speech more closely than a new translation would.

15 *History of the Popes*

(1834)

BOOK I, CHAPTER SECOND

The church and its territories in the beginning of the sixteenth century

Extension of the Papal States

Whatever judgment may be formed of the popes of the earlier ages, it is certain that they always had important interests in view – the duty of upholding an oppressed religion, that of contending with paganism, of diffusing Christianity among the nations of the North, and of establishing an independent hierarchical government. To will, and to achieve some great object, is proper to the dignity of human nature; and while such was their tendency, the popes were sustained in their lofty efforts; but this spirit had passed with the times by which it had been awakened.

Schism had been suppressed, but it had become obvious that no hope remained of effecting a combined action against the Turks. It thus followed that her spiritual head now devoted himself to the interests of his temporal sovereignty, and pursued these with an avidity hitherto unknown.

For quite some time this had been in accord with the tendencies of the times. “I had once thought,” remarks one of the speakers in the Council of Basle, “that the secular power should be wholly separate from that of the Church; but I have now learned that virtue without force is but slightly respected, and that the pope, without the patrimony of the Church, would be merely the servant of kings and princes.” This speaker, who had yet sufficient influences in the assembly to determine the election of Pope Felix V, declares it not so very objectionable that a pope should have sons, who might defend him against the aggressions of tyrants.

This question was afterward considered from a different point of view among the Italians. It was held to be in order that a pope should provide for his own family and promote its interests; in fact, a pontiff neglecting to do this would have exposed himself to criticism. “Others,” writes Lorenzo de’ Medici to Innocent VIII, “have not so long postponed their efforts to attain the papal chair, and have concerned themselves little to maintain the retiring delicacy so long evinced by your holiness. Now is your holiness not only exonerated before God and man, but

this honorable conduct may cause you to incur blame, and your reserve may be attributed to less worthy motives. Zeal and duty lay it on my conscience to remind your holiness that no man is immortal. Be the pontiff as important as he may in his own person, he cannot make his dignity and that importance hereditary; he cannot be said absolutely to possess anything but the honors and emoluments he has secured to his kindred." Such were the counsels offered by him who was considered the wisest man of Italy. It is true that he had himself a direct interest in the matter, having given his daughter in marriage to a son of the Pope, but he would never have dared to express himself thus boldly and without reserve, had not the views he was propounding been admitted without question among the higher classes of his country.

There is a certain internal coherence in the fact that at this period the temporal princes were regularly seeking possession of the papal privileges, and in the circumstance that manifold secular enterprises now began to occupy the most earnest attention of the Pope. He felt himself above all an Italian prince.

Pope Sixtus IV was the first pontiff by whom this purpose was undertaken with a fixed will and effectual results. He was strenuously, and most successfully, followed by Alexander VI. From Julius II this plan received a direction wholly unexpected, and of which the effect was permanent.

The great object of Alexander VI throughout his whole life was to gratify his inclination for pleasure, his ambition, and his love of ease. When at length he had attained the supreme spiritual dignity, he seemed also to have reached the summit of happiness. Despite his advanced years, the exultation he felt seemed to rejuvenate him daily. No painful thought was permitted to disturb his repose for a single night. His only care was to seize on all means that might aid him to increase his power, and advance the wealth and dignity of his sons: on no other subject did he ever seriously bestow a thought.

This one consideration was exclusively at the base of all his political alliances, by which the events of the world were so powerfully influenced. How the Pope would proceed in regard to the marriages, endowments, and advances of his children became a question affecting the politics of all Europe.

The ecclesiastical states had hitherto been divided by the factions of the Guelfs and the Ghibellines, the first represented in Rome by the family of Orsini, the second by the house of Colonna. The popes had usually taken part with one or the other of these factions. Sixtus IV had done so, and his example was followed by Alexander and his son Caesar, who at first attached themselves to the Guelf, or Orsini, party. This alliance enabled them very soon to gain the mastery of all their enemies. They drove the house of Sforza from Pesaro, that of Malatesta from Rimini, and the family of Manfredi from Faenza. They seized upon those powerful, well-fortified cities and thus commenced the foundation of an extensive lordship. But no sooner had they attained this point, no sooner had they freed themselves from their enemies, than they turned every effort against their friends. And it was in this that the practice of the Borgias differed from that of their predecessors, who had ever remained firmly attached to the party they had chosen. Caesar, on the contrary, attacked his own confederates, without hesitation or scruple. The

Duke of Urbino, from whom he had frequently received important aid, was involved, as in a network, by the machinations of Caesar. The duke saved his life with difficulty to become a persecuted fugitive in his own dominions. Vitelli, Baglioni, and other chiefs of the Orsini faction resolved to show him that at least they were capable of resistance. But Caesar Borgia, declaring that "it is permitted to betray those who are the masters of all treasons", decoyed them into his snares with profoundly calculated cruelty and mercilessly deprived them of life. Having thus destroyed both parties, he stepped into their place, gathered the inferior nobility who had been their adherents around him, and took them into his pay. The territories he had seized on were held in subjection by force of terror and cruelty.

The brightest hopes of Alexander were thus realized – the nobles of the land were annihilated, and his house was about to found a great hereditary dominion in Italy. But he had already begun to acquire practical experience of the evil which passions, aroused and unbridled, are capable of producing. With no relative or favorite would Caesar Borgia share his power. His own brother had stood in his way: Caesar caused him to be murdered and thrown into the Tiber. His brother-in-law was assailed and stabbed, by his orders, on the steps of his palace. The wounded man was nursed by his wife and sister, the latter preparing his food with her own hands to protect him from poison; the Pope set a guard upon the house to protect his son-in-law from his son. Caesar derided these precautions. "What cannot be done at noonday," said he, "may be brought about in the evening." When the prince was on the point of recovery, Caesar burst into his chamber, drove out the wife and sister, called in the common executioner, and caused his unfortunate brother-in-law to be strangled. Toward his father, whose life and station he valued only as a means to his own aggrandizement, he displayed not the slightest respect or feeling. He slew Peroto, Alexander's favorite, while the unhappy man clung to his patron for protection and was wrapped within the pontifical mantle. The blood of the favorite flowed over the face of the Pope.

For a certain time the city of the apostles and the whole state of the Church were in the hands of Caesar Borgia. He is described as possessing great personal beauty, and was so strong that in a bullfight he would strike off the head of the animal at a single blow. He was liberal and not without certain features of greatness, but given up to his passions and deeply stained with blood. How Rome did tremble at his name! Caesar required gold and possessed enemies. Every night the corpses of murdered men were found in the streets, yet none dared move, for who but might fear that his own turn would be next? Those whom violence could not reach were poisoned.

There was but one place on earth where such deeds were possible – that, namely, where unlimited temporal power was united to the highest spiritual authority, where the laws, civil and ecclesiastical, were held in one and the same hand. This place was occupied by Caesar Borgia. Even depravity may have its perfection. The kindred of popes have often distinguished themselves in the career of evil, but none attained to the eminence of Caesar Borgia. He may be called a virtuoso in crime.

Was it not in the first and most essential tendencies of Christianity to render such a power impossible? And yet, Christianity itself and the very position of the supreme head of the Church were made subservient to its existence.

Luther was not needed to prove to the world that these things were in direct opposition to the spirit of Christianity. Even at that time men complained that the Pope was preparing the way for antichrist, and laboring for the interest of Satan rather than the kingdom of God.

Prevalence of secular views and interests in the Church

It is not otherwise conceivable than that the whole institution of the Church would bend in the direction taken by its head, contributing to its emergence or engulfed by its force.

Not only the supreme dignity of the pontiff, but all the offices of the Church, were regarded as mere secular property. The Pope nominated cardinals from no better motive than personal favor, the gratification of some potentate, or even (and this was not an infrequent occurrence) for actual payment of money! Could there be any rational expectation that men so appointed would fulfill their spiritual duties?

A large amount of worldly power was at this time conferred, in most instances, together with the bishoprics; they were held more or less as sinecures according to the degree of influence or court favor possessed by the recipient or his family. The Roman Curia thought only of how it might best derive advantage from the vacancies and presentations. For every favor obtained from the datary (an office in charge of papal benefices), a stipulated sum was paid. Nearly all the disputes occurring at this period between the several states of Europe and the Roman Court arose out of these exactions, which the Curia sought by every possible means to increase, while the people of all countries as zealously strove to restrain them.

This principle necessarily acted on all ranks affected by the system based on it, from the highest to the lowest. Many ecclesiastics were found ready to renounce their bishoprics, but they retained the greater part of the revenues, and not infrequently the presentation to the benefices depended on them also. It followed of necessity that the performance of ecclesiastical duties was grievously neglected. In this rapid sketch, I confine myself to remarks made by conscientious prelates of the Roman Court itself. "What a spectacle," they exclaim, "for a Christian who shall take his way through the Christian world, is this desolation of the churches! All the flocks are abandoned by their shepherds, they are given over to the care of hirelings."

Intellectual tendency

Could we open the books of history just as they happened, could that which is fleeting converse with us as does nature, how often we would see life spring from death, just as we now perceive the new offshoot in the decay which we lamented!

Much as we may decry the materialism of spiritual things and the disintegration of the religious institution, the spirit of man could hardly have entered upon one of its most distinctive directions, most heavily fraught with consequences, without it.

We cannot deny the fact that, ingenious, diversified, and profound as are the productions of the Middle Ages, they are yet based on views of the world, visionary in character and but little in accordance with the reality of things. Had the Church remained in full and conscious force, she would have adhered firmly to these views, narrowing and restricting as they were; but as she now was, the human intellect was left at liberty to seek a new development in a totally altered direction.

We may safely assert that during those ages the mind of man was necessarily held within the limits of a closely bounded horizon. The renewed acquaintance with antiquity removed this barrier and opened a loftier, a more comprehensive, and a grander prospect.

We would, however, be going too far if we were immediately to speak of the development of an independent spirit of research, of the discovery of new truths, and of the production of great thoughts. As yet men sought only to comprehend the ancients; none thought of going beyond them. The efficacy of the classic writers lay not so much in the impulse given to a productive scientific activity as in the imitation they incited.

Meanwhile it was not possible that things could remain stationary. Once arrived at this point, to whatever extent the direct imitation of the ancients in their own language might be carried, it was utterly insufficient to occupy the whole field of intellect. There was something in it incomplete and unsatisfactory, and it was so widely practiced that this defect could not long escape the general notice. The new idea gradually arose of imitating the ancients in the vernacular. The men of that day felt that they stood in the same position with regard to the classic authors as did the Romans with regard to the Greeks: they determined no longer to confine themselves within the bounds of a contest in mere details. They now resolved to vie with their masters in all fields of literature, and with youthful enthusiasm rushed forward on this new career.

And was it not profoundly significant that a pope should himself resolve to demolish the ancient basilica of St. Peter, the metropolitan church of Christendom, every part of which was hallowed, every portion crowded with monuments that had received the veneration of ages, and determine to erect a temple, planned after those of antiquity, on its site? This was a purpose exclusively artistic. The two factions then dividing the jealous and contentious world of art united in urging Julius II to this enterprise. Michael Angelo desired a fitting site for that monument to the Pope which he proposed to complete on a vast scale, and with that lofty grandeur which he has exhibited in his *Moses*. Yet more pressing was Bramante. It was his ambition to have space for the execution of that bold project, long before conceived, of raising high in the air on colossal pillars an exact copy of the Pantheon, in all the majesty of its proportions. Many cardinals remonstrated, and it would even appear that there was a general opposition to the plan; so much of personal affection attaches itself to every old church; how much more then to this,

the chief sanctuary of Christendom! But Julius was not accustomed to regard contradiction. Without further consideration he caused one-half of the old church to be demolished, and himself laid the foundation stone of the new one. Thus rose again, in the heart and center of the Christian worship, those forms in which the spirit of the antique rites had found so eloquent an expression.

If this involved a contradiction, it was one that pervaded the whole existence and affected all the habits of the times.

Men frequented the Vatican, less to kneel in devotion on the threshold of the apostles than to admire those great works of ancient art that enriched the dwelling of the pontiff – the Belvedere Apollo and the Laocoön.

In this exuberance of effort and production of intellect and art, and in the enjoyment of increasing temporal power attached to the highest spiritual dignity, lived Leo X.[†] One must forever loath the debasing sensuality of Alexander VI; in the court of Leo X there were few things deserving blame in themselves, although we cannot but perceive that his pursuits might have been more strictly in accordance with his position as supreme head of the Church.

Easily does life veil its own incongruities as they pass, but no sooner do men set themselves to ponder, examine, and compare, than at once they become fully apparent to all.

Of true Christian sentiment and conviction there could be no question in such a state of things; they were, on the contrary, directly opposed.

We thus see how all is enchained and connected – how one event calls forth another. The pretensions of temporal princes to ecclesiastical power leads to the secular ambition in the popes, the corruption and decline of religious institutions leads to the development of a new intellectual tendency, until at length the very foundations of the faith become shaken in the public opinion.

Opposition in Germany

There appears to me something especially remarkable in the relationship which Germany, in particular, adopted toward this spiritual development, participating in it, albeit in a manner which deviated substantially.

In Italy, the promoters of classical study, and those from whom the age received its impulse toward it, were poets – as, for example, Boccaccio and Petrarch. In Germany, the same effect was due to a religious fraternity, the Hieronymites – a community united by a life of labor passed in sequestration from the world. It was one of this brotherhood, the profound and blameless mystic Thomas à Kempis, from whose school proceeded all those earnest and venerable men who, first drawn to Italy by the light of ancient learning, newly kindled there, afterward returned to pour its beneficent influence over the breadth of Germany.

The difference thus observable in the beginning was equally apparent in the subsequent progress.

In Italy the works of the ancients were studied for the sciences they contained; in Germany one took them to school. The Italians sought a solution of the highest problems that can occupy the human intellect, if not by independent thought, at

least with the help of the ancients. The Germans devoted the best books to the education of their youth. The Italians were attracted toward the ancients by the beauty of form, which they sought to imitate, and thence proceeded to the formation of a national literature. Among the Germans, these same studies took a more spiritual direction. The fame of Erasmus and Reuchlin is familiar to all; if we inquire what constitutes the principal merit of the latter, we find it to be his having written the first Hebrew grammar – a monument of which he hoped, as did the Italian poets of their works, that “it would be more durable than iron”. As by Reuchlin the study of the Old Testament was first facilitated, so was that of the New Testament indebted to Erasmus. To this it was that his attention was devoted; it was he who first caused it to be printed in Greek, and his paraphrases and commentaries on it have produced an effect far surpassing the end he had proposed to himself.

While the public mind of Italy had become alienated from and even opposed to the Church, an effect in some respects similar had taken place in Germany. There that freedom of thought which can never be wholly suppressed gained admission into the literary world and occasionally displayed itself in decided skepticism. A more profound theology had also arisen from sources but imperfectly known, and though discountenanced by the Church, had never been put down. This now formed an essential part of the literary movement in Germany.

Thus, on either side of the Alps, the progress of the age was in direct opposition to ecclesiastical ascendancy. In Italy this tendency was associated with science and literature; in Germany it arose from biblical studies and a more profound theology. There it was negative and incredulous; here it was positive and full of an earnest faith. There it destroyed the very foundations of the Church; here the desire was to construct the edifice anew. In Italy it was mocking and sarcastic, but ever pliant and deferential to power; in Germany, full of a serious indignation, and deeply determined on a stubbornness of assault such as the Roman Church had never before experienced.

The fact that this was first directed against the abuses arising from the sale of indulgences has sometimes been regarded as a mere accident. But as the alienation of that which is most essentially spiritual, implicit in the doctrine of indulgences, laid open and made visible the weakest point in the whole system – the worldliness of spirit now prevalent in the Church – so it was, of all things, best calculated to shock and offend the convictions of those earnest and profound thinkers, the German theologians. A man like Luther – whose religion was sincere and deeply felt, whose opinions of sin and justification were those propounded by the early German theologians and confirmed in his mind by the study of Scripture which he had drunk in with a thirsting heart – could not fail to be revolted and shocked by the sale of indulgences. Forgiveness of sins to be purchased for money! This must of necessity be deeply offensive to him, whose conclusions were drawn from profound contemplation of the eternal relation existing between God and man and who had learned to interpret Scripture for himself.

He opposed individual abuses, but the ill-founded and prejudiced opposition he encountered, leading him on from step to step, presently made him aware of the

connection between this monstrous abuse and the general disorders of the Church. His was not a nature to shrink from or tremble at the most extreme measures. With unhesitating boldness he attacked the head of the Church himself. From the midst of an order hitherto the most submissive adherents and devoted defenders of the papacy, that of the Friars-Mendicant, now rose the most determined and most vigorous opponent the pontificate had yet known. And as Luther, with the utmost precision and acuteness, held up its own declared principles in the face of that power which had so widely departed from them – as he did but express truths of which all men had long been convinced – as his opposition, the full import of which had not yet become apparent, was acceptable to those who rejected the faith, and yet, because it was undertaken in defense of those principles, was consonant to the mind of the earnest believer – so had his writings an incalculable effect and were rapidly disseminated, not in Germany alone, but through the whole world.

CHAPTER THIRD

Political complications and the reformation

The secular spirit that had now taken possession of the papacy had occasioned a twofold movement in the world. The one was ecclesiastical in the proper sense; a falling off from the Church had begun which entailed a vast future. The second movement was of a political nature; the elements which the pope had put in conflict were still in ferment, which gave rise to the expectation of new developments in affairs in general. These two movements, their effect on each other, and the contests to which they gave rise, imposed their influence on the history of the papacy for centuries.

Well would it be for states and princes, should all be convinced that no essential good can result to them except from their own exertions – that no benefit is real unless acquired by their own strength and effort!

While the Italian powers were laboring to conquer each other with foreign aid, they had in effect destroyed that independence which they had enjoyed during the fifteenth century and exposed their country to becoming the prize of a foreign victor. A large share in this result must be imputed to the popes.* Two great powers arose, and these contended, if not for universal supremacy, at least for the foremost position in Europe. No pontiff could cope with them any longer, and it was in Italy that they sought their battleground.

The French were the first to show themselves. Soon after the accession of Leo X they appeared, in greater force than any with which they had ever before crossed the Alps, to regain possession of Milan. Francis I, in all the ardor of his chivalrous youth, was their leader. Everything depended on whether the Swiss could resist him or not; therefore it was that the battle of Marignano was so important, for here this question was resolved. The Swiss were totally routed, and since that defeat they have exercised no independent influence in Italy.*

In effect, the French acquired a decisive preponderance in Italy by this victory. Had it been vigorously followed up, neither Tuscany nor the States of the Church, both so easily incited to revolt, could have offered them resistance, and the Spaniards would have found it sufficiently difficult to maintain themselves in Naples. "The King," says Francesco Vettori explicitly, "might become lord of Italy." How much was at this moment depending on Leo!

Contrary to the advice of his cardinals, he betook himself to Bologna to confer with the King. They concluded the concordat, in which they divided between them the rights of the Gallican Church. Leo was compelled to give up Parma and Placentia, but he succeeded in dispersing the storm that had threatened him, persuaded the King to return, and himself remained secure in the possession of his dominions.*

The second great power had meanwhile consolidated itself. How extraordinary it seems that one and the same prince should hold the sceptre in Vienna, Brussels, Valladolid, Saragossa, and Naples! Nor was this all – his rule extended even to another continent, yet this was brought about almost imperceptibly by a series of family alliances. This aggrandizement of the house of Austria, which linked together so many different countries, was one of the most important and eventful changes that Europe had yet witnessed. At that moment when the nations were diverging from the point that had hitherto been their common center, they were again gathered, by their political circumstances, into new combinations and formed into a new system. The power of Austria instantly opposed itself to the preponderance of France. With his imperial dignity, Charles V acquired legal claims to supremacy, at least in Lombardy. On account of these Italian affairs the battle was soon joined. The popes, as we have before remarked, had hoped to secure entire independence by the extension of their states; they now found themselves hemmed in between two greatly superior powers. A pope was not so insignificant that he could remain neutral in a strife between them, neither was he sufficiently powerful to secure preponderance for that scale into which he should cast his weight; his safety could only be found in the dexterous use of passing events. Leo is reported to have said that when a man has formed a compact with one party, he must nonetheless take care to negotiate with the other. This double-tongued policy was forced on him by the position in which he was placed.

But the pontiff could not seriously doubt which party it was his interest to adopt, for had he not felt it of infinite importance to regain Parma and Placentia – had the promise of Charles V, that an Italian should hold possession of Milan, a thing so much to his advantage, been insufficient to determine his choice – there was still another consideration, and one that appears to me entirely conclusive; this was a motive connected with religion.

Throughout the whole period of time that we are contemplating, there was no assistance so much desired by the temporal sovereigns in their disputes with the popes as that of a spiritual opposition to the papal decrees. But when had the Pope so bold or so prosperous an opponent as Luther? The mere fact that so fearless a foe to the papacy had made his appearance, the very existence of such a phenomenon, was highly significant and imparted to the person of the reformer a

decided political importance. It was thus that Maximilian considered it, nor would he permit injury of any kind to be offered to this monk. He caused him to be specially recommended to the Elector of Saxony – “there might come a time when he would be needed” – and from that moment the influence of Luther increased day by day. The Pope could neither convince nor alarm this opponent, neither could he get him into his hands. One resource yet remained to him. Might he not hope that by an alliance with the Emperor, he could secure the aid of that sovereign for the repression of so dangerous religious innovations? It is certain that they would be protected and even promoted by the Emperor, should Leo declare against him. Religious and political matters were the subject of discussion in the Diet of Worms (1521). The Pope entered into a league with the Emperor for the recovery of Milan. On the day when the alliance was concluded, the edict of outlawry proclaimed against Luther is said to have been also dated. There may have been other motives operating to produce this act of proscription, but no one will persuade himself that there was not an immediate connection with the political treaty.

And little time elapsed before the twofold effect of this league became manifest.* It was a moment of infinite importance: new developments had arisen in politics, and a great movement had commenced in the Church. The aspect of affairs permitted Leo to flatter himself that he was directing the first, and had succeeded in repressing the second. He was still young enough to indulge in the anticipation of fully profiting from the results of this auspicious moment.

Strange and delusive destiny of man! The Pope was at his villa of Malliana when he received intelligence that his party had triumphantly entered Milan. He abandoned himself to the exultation arising naturally from the successful completion of an important enterprise, and looked cheerfully on at the festivities his people were preparing on the occasion.

He paced back and forth until deep in the night, between the window and a blazing hearth – it was the month of November. Somewhat exhausted, but still in high spirits, he arrived in Rome, and the rejoicings celebrated there for his triumph were not yet concluded, when he was attacked by a mortal disease. “Pray for me,” said he to his servants, “that I may yet make you all happy.” We see that he loved life, but his hour was come; he had not time to receive the sacrament nor extreme unction. So suddenly, so prematurely, and surrounded by hopes so bright! – he died – “as the poppy fadeth”.*

We have called him fortunate. At the moment of his death, the purposes he had proposed to himself in the policy he had pursued were all tending toward the happiest results. It may be considered a further proof of his good fortune that his life was not prolonged. Times of a different character succeeded, and it is difficult to believe that he could have opposed a successful resistance to their unfavorable influences. The whole weight of them was experienced by his successors. On a worthier man, however, the choice of the conclave could scarcely have fallen. The reputation of Adrian was without a blemish; laborious, upright, and pious, he was of so earnest a gravity that a faint smile was his nearest approach to mirth, yet benevolent withal, full of pure intentions, a true servant of religion. What a contrast when he entered that city where Leo had held his court with so lavish a splendor!

No one could be more earnest than was Adrian VI (he chose to retain his own name) in his desire to ameliorate the grievous condition into which Christendom had fallen at his accession.

He was determined to anticipate the demands of the Germans with regard to the abuses that had made their way into the Church. His avowal that such existed was most explicit. "We know," he observes in the instructions for the Nuncio Chieregato, whom he sent to the Diet, "that for a considerable period many abominable things have taken place beside the holy chair – abuses in spiritual matters – exorbitant straining of prerogatives – evil everywhere. From the head, the malady has proceeded to the limbs; from the Pope, it has extended to the prelates; we are all gone astray, there is none that hath done rightly – no not one." On his part he proceeds to promise all that may be expected from a good pope: he will promote the learned and upright, suppress abuses, and if not all at once, yet gradually, bring about a reformation both in the head and members such as men have so long desired and demanded.

But to reform the world is not so light a task; the good intentions of an individual, however high his station, are insufficient. Too deeply do abuses strike their roots. With life itself they grow and become entwined, so that it is at length difficult to eradicate the one without endangering the other.*

The Germans were not now to be conciliated by what would once have been hailed as a reformation of head and members, and even had they been, how difficult, how almost impracticable, would such reform have been found!

If the Pope attempted to reduce those revenues of the Curia in which he detected an appearance of simony, he could not do so without alienating the legitimate rights of those persons whose offices were founded on these revenues; offices that, for the most part, had been purchased by the men who held them.

If he contemplated a change in the dispensations of marriage, or some relaxation of existing prohibitions, it was instantly represented to him that such a step would infringe upon and weaken the discipline of the Church.

To abate the crying abuse of indulgences, he would gladly have revived the ancient penances; but the Penitenziaria at once called his attention to the danger he would thus incur; for, while he sought to secure Germany, Italy would be lost.

Enough is said to show that the Pope could make no step toward reform, without seeing himself assailed by a thousand difficulties.

Thus it came to pass that in affairs of vital importance to the general interest, nothing effectual was accomplished.* Luther was more than ever active in Germany; and in Rome, which was, besides, afflicted with the plague, a general discontent prevailed.

Adrian once said, "How much depends on the times in which even the best of men are cast!" The painful sense he entertained of his difficult position is eloquently expressed in this sorrowing outburst. Most appropriately it was engraved on his monument in the German church at Rome.

And here it becomes obvious, that not to Adrian personally must it be solely attributed that his times were so unproductive in results. The papacy was encompassed by a host of coercive circumstances with universal implications

that would have furnished infinite occupation, even to a man more familiar with the medium of action, better versed in men, and more fertile in expedients than Adrian VI.

Among all the cardinals, there was no one who seemed so peculiarly fitted to administer the government successfully, no one who appeared so well prepared to support the weight of the popedom, than Giulio de' Medici. He had already managed a large share of the public business under Leo – all the details were in his hands – and even under Adrian he had maintained a certain degree of influence. This time he did not permit the supreme dignity to escape him, and he ascended the papal throne under the name of Clement VII.

The faults and mistakes of his immediate predecessors were carefully avoided by the new Pope. The instability, prodigality, and pleasure-seeking habits of Leo, and that ceaseless conflict with the tastes and opinions of his court into which Adrian had suffered himself to be drawn, were all eschewed by Clement VII. Everything was arranged with the utmost discretion, and his own conduct was remarkable for the blameless rectitude and moderation of its tenor. The pontifical ceremonies were performed with due care. Audience was given with untiring application from early morning to night. Science and the arts were encouraged in that direction toward which they had now become decidedly bent. Clement was himself a man of extensive information. He spoke with equal knowledge of his subject, whether that were philosophy and theology, or mechanics and hydraulic architecture. In all affairs he displayed extraordinary acuteness. The most perplexing questions were unravelled, the most difficult circumstances were penetrated to the very bottom by his extreme sagacity. No man could debate a point with more address: under Leo he had already manifested a prudence in counsel and a circumspect ability in practice that none could surpass.

How closely the bygone course of events and his personal position seemed to bind Clement both by necessity and inclination to the Spanish cause in Italy. Yet how many were the reasons that now presented themselves, all tending to make him execrate the power he had so largely contributed to establish, and place himself in opposition to the cause for which he had hitherto so zealously labored!

There is, perhaps, no effort in politics so difficult to make as that of retracing the path we have hitherto trodden, of reversing successes which we ourselves had achieved. And how much was now depending on such an effort! The Italians were profoundly sensible to the fact that the acts of the present moment would decide their fate for centuries. A powerful feeling of community had arisen and prevailed throughout the nation. I am fully persuaded that this may be in great part ascribed to the literary and artistic progress of Italy, a progress in which it left other nations so far behind.[†]

We may state that the temper of Germany now also became decisive for Italy. As a nation the Italians were far from being zealous for their great enterprise against Spain, and even among those who desired its success, unanimity did not prevail. Able as he was and thoroughly Italian in spirit, the Pope was yet not one of those men who calmly control the current of circumstances and seem to hold fortune enchained. His keen perception of realities seemed injurious rather than

serviceable to him. His conviction that he was the weaker party was stronger than was expedient. All possible contingencies, every form of danger, presented themselves too clearly before him; they bewildered his mind and confused his decisions. There is a practical and inventive faculty by which some men intuitively perceive the simple and practicable in affairs, and guided by this, they rapidly seize on the best expedient. This he did not possess; in the most critical moments he was seen to hesitate, waver, and waste his thoughts in attempts to save money. His allies having failed in their promises, the results he had hoped for were far from being obtained. In November 1526, Georg von Frundsberg crossed the Alps with a formidable body of German soldiers to bring the contest to an end. This army was altogether Lutheran – leader and followers. “When once I make my way to Rome,” said Frundsberg, “I will hang the Pope.”

With anxious thought the gathering storm is seen on the narrowing and lowering horizon. Rome, loaded perhaps with vices, yet nonetheless teeming with the noblest effort, the most exalted intellect, the richest culture; powerfully creative, adorned with matchless works of art such as the world has never since produced; replete with riches, ennobled by the impress of genius, and exercising a vital and imperishable influence on the whole world, this Rome is now threatened with destruction. As the masses of the imperial force drew together, the Italian troops dispersed before them, the only army that yet remained followed them from afar. The Emperor had long been unable to pay his troops and could not alter their direction even had he desired to do so. They marched beneath the imperial banner but were guided only by their own stormy will and impulse. Clement still hoped, negotiated, offered concessions, retracted them; but the sole expedient that could have saved him – namely contenting these hordes with all the money they believed was owed them – this, he either could not, or would not adopt. Will he then at least make a stand against the enemy with such weapons as he has? Four thousand men would have sufficed to secure the passes of Tuscany, but the attempt was not even thought of. Rome contained within her walls some thirty thousand inhabitants capable of bearing arms; many of these men had seen service. They wore swords by their sides, which they used freely in their feuds among each other, and then boasted of their exploits. But to oppose the enemy, who brought with him certain destruction, five hundred men were the most that could ever be mustered to leave the city. At the first onset the Pope and his forces were overthrown. On the sixth of May 1527, two hours before sunset, the imperialists poured their unbridled numbers into Rome. Their former general, Frundsberg, was no longer at their head. In a disturbance among his troops, he had been unable to repress them as was his wont, and being struck by apoplexy, he remained behind in a state of dangerous illness. Bourbon, who had led the army so far, was killed at the first fixing of the scaling-ladders. Thus, restrained by no leader, the bloodthirsty soldiery, hardened by long privations and rendered savage by their trade, burst over the city. Never richer booty fell into more violent hands, never was plunder more continuous or more destructive. How vivid a luster was cast over the beginning of the sixteenth century by the splendor of Rome! It designates a period most influential on the development of the human mind. This day saw the light of that splendor extinguished forever.

No less important was another occurrence: before Rome was captured and when it was merely seen that the march of Bourbon was in that direction, the enemies of the Medici in Florence had availed themselves of the confusion of the moment and once more expelled the family of the Pope. The revolt of his native city was more painful to Clement than even the downfall of Rome. With astonishment men beheld him, after so many indignities, again connect himself with the imperialists. He did so because he saw that with the help of the Spaniards alone could his kindred and party be reinstated in Florence; the domination of the Emperor was at least more endurable to Clement than the disobedience of his rebels. As the fortunes of the French were seen to decline, the Pope made approaches to the Spaniards; and when the former were at length entirely defeated, he concluded the Treaty of Barcelona with the latter. He so completely changed his policy that the very army by which Rome had been sacked before his eyes, and he himself so long held captive, was now called to his assistance. Reinforced and strengthened, it was led to the reduction of his native city.

Thenceforth Charles was more powerful in Italy than any emperor had been for many centuries. The crown that he received at Bologna had now regained its full significance; Milan gradually became as entirely subjected to his authority as was Naples. His restoration of the Medici to their seat in Florence secured him a direct and permanent influence in Tuscany. The remaining states of Italy either sought his alliance or submitted to his power. With the might of Germany and Spain, united by the force of his victorious arms and in the rights of his imperial dignity, he held all Italy in subjection, from the Alps to the sea.

To this point it was then that the Italian wars conducted the country; from that period never has she been freed from the rule of the stranger. Let us now examine the progress of the religious dissensions that were so intimately entwined with the political events.

It was generally believed, whether justly or not I will not inquire, that a general council of the Church alone could settle differences so important and remove errors so fatal. Church councils had maintained their credit precisely because a very natural repugnance to them had been evinced by the popes, and all opposition to them by the papal chair had tended to raise them in public estimation. In the year 1530, Charles applied his thoughts seriously to this matter, and promised to call a council within a brief specified period.

In the different complications of their interests with those of the pontificate, the princes had always desired to find some spiritual backing for their point of view. Charles might thus assure himself of most zealous allies in a council assembled under existing circumstances. Convened at his instigation, it would be held under his influence and to him also would revert the execution of its edicts. These decrees would have to bear upon two important questions – they would affect the Pope equally with his opponents, the old idea of a reformation in head and members would be realized, and how decided a predominance would all this secure to the temporal power, above all to that of Charles himself!

This mode of proceeding was most judicious. It was, if you will have it so, inevitable; but it was, at the same time, for the best interest of the Emperor.

On the other hand, no event could be better calculated to awaken anxiety in the pontiff and his court. I find that at the first serious mention of a council, the price of all the salable offices of the court declined considerably. The danger threatened by a council to the existing state of things is obvious from this fact.

In addition to this, Clement VII had personal motives for objecting to the measure. He was not of legitimate birth, neither had he risen to the supreme dignity by means that were altogether blameless. Again, he had been determined by considerations entirely personal to employ the resources of the Church in a contest with his native city, and for all these things a pope might fairly expect heavy reckoning with a council. Thus it inspired him with a just terror, and Soriano tells us that he would not willingly utter its very name.

He did not reject the proposal outright – this he could not do without implicating the honor of the Papal See – but one can easily imagine how reluctant he was to receive it.

He submitted, certainly. He was compliant but he did not fail to set forth the objections to the measure, and that in the most persuasive forms. He represented all the dangers and difficulties inseparable from a council, declaring its success to be very much in doubt. Next he stipulated the concurrence of all other princes, as well as a previous subjection of the Protestants – demands that were perfectly in accordance with the papal system and doctrine, but utterly impracticable in the existing state of affairs.* He doubtless still hoped to evade the necessity that hung over him.

But it clung to him fast and firm. When Charles returned to Italy in 1533 still impressed with what he had seen and heard in Germany, he pressed the Pope in person and with increased earnestness during a conference held at Bologna on the subject of the council, which he had so frequently demanded in writing. Their opinions were thus brought into direct collision – the Pope held fast by his conditions, the Emperor declared their fulfillment impossible – they could come to no agreement. In the documents respecting these matters, a certain discrepancy is perceptible – the Pope appearing more supporting of the Emperor's wishes in some than in others; however this may be, he had no alternative – a fresh proclamation had to be issued. He could not so effectually blind himself as not to perceive that when the Emperor (who was gone to Spain) should return, mere words would be insufficient to content him – that the danger he dreaded, and with which a council summoned under such circumstances certainly did menace the Roman See, could then be no longer averted.

The situation was one in which the possessor of a power, of whatever kind, might well be excused for resorting even to audacious measures if these were the only means that could insure his own safety. The political preponderance of the Emperor was already excessive, and although the Pope had resigned himself to this state of things, he could not but feel his own depressed condition. In arbitrating the long-standing disputes of the Church with Ferrara, Charles V had decided for the latter; this mortified the pontiff, and though he acquiesced in the decision, he complained of it to his friends. How much more afflicting was it now when this monarch, from whom he had hoped the immediate subjugation of the

Protestants, was preferring his claim under pretext of religious dissension to a predominance in ecclesiastical affairs such as no emperor had enjoyed for centuries. Nay, that he was proceeding without scruple to acts that must compromise the spiritual authority and dignity of the Holy See. Must Clement indeed endure to see himself sink utterly into the Emperor's hands, and wholly given up to his tender mercies?

His resolution was taken even while in Bologna. More than once Francis had proposed to cement his political alliances with Clement by means of a family connection. This the pontiff had hitherto declined – in the desperate position of his present affairs, he decided to accept. It is expressly affirmed that the real cause of Clement's once again lending an ear to the French King was the demand of Charles for a council.

The Pope would most probably never more have attempted to establish a balance of power between these two great monarchs and to divide his favor equally between them from purely political motives; but it was on this course that he now determined, in consideration of the dangers threatening the Church.

Shortly thereafter Clement met with Francis I at Marseilles, where a very close alliance was concluded. Precisely as Clement had confirmed his friendship with the Emperor during the Florentine difficulties by accepting a natural daughter of Charles as wife to one of his nephews, so did he now cement the bond which the embarrassments of the Church compelled him to form with Francis by the betrothal of his young niece, Catherine de' Medici, to the King's second son. In the first instance, it was against the French, and their indirect influence on Florence, that he sought to defend himself; on this occasion, the Emperor and his intentions with regard to a council were the cause of fear.

He now took no further pains to conceal his purpose. We have a letter addressed by him to Ferdinand I, wherein he declares that his efforts to procure the concurrence of the Christian princes to the assembling of a council had been without effect. King Francis I, to whom he had spoken, thought the present moment unfavorable for such a purpose and refused to adopt the suggestion. But Clement still hoped for some other opportunity to obtain a more favorable decision from the Christian sovereigns. I cannot comprehend the doubt that has existed in regard to the real intentions of the Pope. It was but in his last communication with the Catholic princes of Germany that he had repeated his demand for universal concurrence as a condition to the proposed council. Is not his present declaration that he cannot bring about this general agreement equivalent to the positive assertion that he recalls his announcement of the council? In his alliance with France, he had found alike the courage to pursue this line of conduct and the pretext for it. I cannot convince myself that the council ever would have been held in his pontificate.

The papacy was in an utterly false and untenable position; its worldly tendencies had produced a degeneracy that had in its turn called forth innumerable opponents and adversaries. These tendencies being persisted in, the increasing complications and antagonism of temporal and ecclesiastical interests, promoted its decadence, and at length bore it wholly to the ground.

The schism of England filled the last year of Clement's life; his last years were rendered all the more bitter by the consciousness that he was not altogether blameless, and that his misfortunes stood in a sorry relationship to his personal qualities. Day by day the course of things became more threatening. Already Francis was preparing to make a new descent on Italy; and for this design he declared himself to have had the verbal, if not the written, sanction of Clement's approval. The Emperor would no longer be put off with pretences and urged the assembling of the council more pressingly than ever. Family discords added their bitterness to these sufferings; after his labors and sacrifices for the reduction of Florence, the Pope had to watch his two nephews enter into dispute for the sovereignty of that city and proceed to the most savage hostilities against each other. His anxious reflections on all these calamities, coupled with the fear of coming events, sorrow, and secret anguish, says Soriano, brought him to the grave.

We have pronounced Leo fortunate. Clement was perhaps a better man, certainly he had fewer faults, was more active, and, as regarded details, even more acute than Leo. But in what he did and what he neglected Clement was unfortunate – without doubt the most ill-fated pontiff that ever sat on the papal throne. To the superiority of the hostile powers pressing on him from all sides, he opposed only the most uncertain policy, ever depending on the probabilities of the moment. This brought about his utter downfall. Those efforts for the establishment of an independent temporal power, to which his more celebrated predecessors had devoted their best energies, he was doomed in his own case to find resulting in perfect subjugation; he had to see those from whom he had hoped to rescue his native Italy establish their dominion over her soil forever. The great secession of the Protestants proceeded unremittingly before his eyes, and the measures he adopted in the hope of arresting its progress did but serve to give it wider and more rapid extension. He left the Papal See immeasurably lowered in reputation and deprived of all effectual influence, whether spiritual or temporal. Northern Germany, for long so important to the papacy, to whose conversion in remote times the power of the popes was principally indebted for its establishment in the West, and whose revolt against Henry IV had so largely aided them in the completion of their hierarchy, had now risen against them. Our fatherland has the undying merit of having restored Christianity to a purer form than it had presented since the first ages of the Church – of having rediscovered the true religion. Armed with this weapon, Germany was unconquerable. Her convictions made themselves a path through all the neighboring countries. Scandinavia had been among the first to receive them; they had diffused themselves over England contrary to the purposes of the King, but under the protection of the measures he had pursued. In Switzerland they had struggled for, and with certain modifications, had attained a secure existence; they progressed into France; we find traces of them in Italy, and even in Spain, while Clement yet lived. These waves roll ever onward. In these opinions there is a force that attracts and entralls all minds; and that struggle between the spiritual and temporal interests, in which the papacy suffered itself to become involved, would seem to have been designed expressly for their progress and the establishment of their universal dominion.

BOOK II, CHAPTER FIRST**Beginning of a regeneration of catholicism**

We are not to believe that the influence of public opinion on the world has begun to make itself felt for the first time in our own day; through every age of modern Europe it has constituted a vital element of life. Who shall say whence it arises or how it is formed? It may be regarded as the most peculiar product of that identification of interests which holds society together, as the most intelligible expression of those internal movements and revolutions by which life, shared in common, is agitated. Its sources are as secret as its sustenance; requiring little support from evidence or reason, it obtains mastery over men's minds by the force of involuntary convictions. But only in its most general outline is it in harmony with itself; within these it is reproduced in innumerable greater or smaller circles and with modifications varied to infinity. And since new observations and experiences are perpetually flowing in upon it, since there are always original minds that, though affected by its course, are not borne along by its current but rather themselves impress on it a powerful reaction – it is thus involved in an endless series of metamorphoses; transient and multiform, it is sometimes more, sometimes less, in harmony with truth and right, being rather a tendency of the moment than a fixed system. It is often the attendant only of the event that has contributed to produce it, and from which it derives form and extension. There are times, nevertheless, when encountering a rugged will that refuses to be overcome, it extends to coercive demand. That its perception of defects and deficiencies is frequently the just one must needs be confessed, but it cannot, by its very nature, produce a pure, firm consciousness of what is operable and what is not. Hence it can be seen to be at opposite extremes at different times: as it aided to found the papacy, so did it help to overthrow that power. In the times under consideration, it was at one period utterly profane, at another as entirely spiritual. We have seen it inclining toward Protestantism throughout the whole of Europe; we shall also see that in a great portion of the world it will assume an entirely different coloring.

Attempts at internal reform and a reconciliation with the Protestants

Possibly the most honorable act of Paul III, that indeed by which he signaled his accession to the papal throne, was the elevation of many distinguished men to the College of Cardinals without any consideration but that of their personal merits. The first of these was the Venetian Contarini, by whom, it is said, the others were afterward proposed. They were men of irreproachable character, in high repute for learning and piety, and well acquainted with the requirements of different countries – Caraffa, for example, had long resided in Spain and the Netherlands; Sadolet was bishop of Carpentras in France; Poole was a refugee from England; Giberto, after having long taken active part in administering, was then ruling his bishopric of Verona with exemplary wisdom; Federigo Fregoso, who was

archbishop of Salerno – almost all, be it observed, were members of the Oratory of Divine Love, and many of them held opinions inclining to Protestantism.

It was these same cardinals who now prepared a plan for the reform of the Church by command of the Pope. This became known to the Protestants, who rejected it, not without derision. They had indeed meanwhile advanced far beyond its most liberal provisions. But we are not on that account permitted to deny the extreme significance of such an act on the part of the Catholic Church. Here we have the evil grappled with in Rome herself. In the presence of the Pope, former popes were accused of misgovernment, and in the introduction to the document now laid before him, his predecessors were accused of having “frequently chosen servants, not as desiring to learn from them what their duties demanded, but rather to procure the declaration that those things were lawful toward which their desires led them”. This abuse of the supreme power was declared to be the most prolific source of corruption.

It may be readily comprehended that a complete reformation of abuses, in which were involved so many personal rights and conflicting claims and which had become so closely interwoven with all the habits of life, was of all things the most difficult that could be undertaken. Nevertheless, Pope Paul did gradually seem disposed to enter earnestly into the task.

And now, supposing ameliorations really to have been made – the Roman Court reformed and the abuses of the constitution done away with – if then that same dogma from which Luther had started had been taken as the principle of renovation in life and doctrine, might not a reconciliation have been possible? For even the Protestants did not tear themselves hastily or without reluctance from the communion of the Church.

To many minds this seemed possible, and earnest hopes were founded on the results of the religious conference.

Never were parties closer to one another than at the conference of Ratisbon in the year 1541; political relations looked extremely favorable, and the Emperor, who desired to employ all the forces of the empire in a war with the Turks or with France, wished for nothing more earnestly than a reconciliation. He chose the most sagacious and temperate men he could find among the Catholic theologians, namely Gropper and Julius Pflug, to proceed to the conference. On the other side, the Landgrave Philip was again on good terms with Austria and hoped to obtain the command in the war for which he was preparing. With admiration and delight the Emperor beheld this warlike chief ride into Ratisbon on his stately charger, the rider no less vigorous than his steed. The pacific Bucer and gentle Melanchthon appeared on the Protestant side.

The earnest desire of Paul for an amicable result from this conference was made manifest by his choice of the legate whom he sent to it – no other than that Gaspar Contarini, whom we have seen so profoundly attached to the new modes of thought that were prevalent in Italy and so active in devising measures of general reform. Adorned with such qualities, moderate, nearly approaching the Protestant tenets in their most important characteristics, Contarini appeared in Germany; by a regeneration of Church doctrines from this point, and by the

abolition of abuses, he hoped to reconcile the existing differences. But had not these already gone too far? Had not the dissident opinions taken root too deeply? I refrain from deciding these questions immediately.

There was also another Venetian, Marino Giustiniano, who left shortly before this Diet and who seemed to have examined the situation with great care. To him the reconciliation appears very possible, but he declares that certain important concessions are indispensable. The following he particularizes: "The Pope must no longer claim to be the vice-regent of Christ in temporal as well as spiritual things. He must replace the profligate and ignorant bishops and priests, appointing men of blameless lives capable of guiding and instructing the people in their places; the sale of masses, the plurality of benefices, and the abuse of compositions must no longer be suffered; a violation of the rule as regards fasting must be visited by very light punishment at the most. If in addition to these things, the marriage of priests be permitted, and the communion in both kinds be allowed, Giustiniano believes that the Germans would at once abjure their dissent, yield obedience to the Pope in spiritual affairs, resign their opposition to the mass, submit to auricular confession, and even allow the necessity of good works as fruits of faith – insofar, that is, as they are the consequence of faith. The existing discord having arisen because of abuses, so there is no doubt that by the abolition of these it may be done away with."

This, if I do not mistake, was a moment of most eventful import, not for Germany only, but for the whole world. With regard to the former, the points we have intimated tended in their consequences to change the whole ecclesiastical constitution of the land, to secure a position of increased liberty as regarded the Pope, and a freedom from temporal encroachment on his part. The unity of the Church would have been maintained, and with it that of the nation. But infinitely farther than even this would the consequences have extended. If the moderate party, from whom these attempts proceeded and by whom they were conducted, had been able to maintain predominance in Rome and in Italy, how entirely different an aspect must the Catholic world necessarily have assumed!

A result so extraordinary was, however, not to be obtained without a vehement struggle.

A reconciliation such as that contemplated would have given Germany an unaccustomed unity and would have greatly extended the power of the Emperor, who would have been at no loss to avail himself of this advantage. As chief of the moderate party, he would inevitably have obtained predominant influence throughout Europe, especially in the event of a general council. All the accustomed hostilities were necessarily awakened at the mere prospect of such a result.

Suffice it to say that in Rome, France, and Germany there arose among the enemies of Charles V – among those who either were or appeared to be the most zealous for Catholicism – a determined opposition to his efforts for the conciliation of differences. An unusual degree of intimacy was observed in Rome between the pontiff and the French ambassador. It was thought that the former meant to propose a marriage between Vittoria Farnese, his relative, and one of the house of Guise.

A powerful effect was inevitably produced by these agitations on the different theologians. "The enemies of the Emperor, whether in or out of Germany," says the secretary of Contarini, "dreading the power he would obtain in the union of all Germany, began to sow discord among these theologians. Carnal envy hath interrupted the conference." If we consider how many difficulties were involved in the very nature of such an attempt, it cannot surprise us that agreement as to any one article was no longer possible.

Those who attribute the whole or indeed the greater share of the blame for this failure to the Protestants pass beyond the limits of justice.

After the first encouraging discussions in Ratisbon, the Pope soon announced his firm resolve to the legate that neither in his official capacity, nor as a private person, should the legate tolerate any resolution in which the Catholic faith and opinions were expressed in words admitting the possibility of ambiguous interpretation. The formulas in which Contarini had thought to reconcile the conflicting opinions regarding the supremacy of the Pope and the power of councils were rejected at Rome unconditionally. The legate was compelled to offer explanations that seemed in flagrant contradiction to his own previous words.

So that the conference might not be altogether without result, the Emperor desired that both parties would, for the present at least, abide by the articles mutually assented to, and that with regard to those still in dispute, each should tolerate the differences of the other; but neither Luther nor the Pope could be moved to agree to this, and the cardinal was given to understand that the sacred college had resolved unanimously not to extend tolerance under any conditions whatever in regard to articles so vitally essential.

After hopes so great, after a beginning so propitious, Contarini saw himself compelled to return without affecting any part of his purpose. He had wished to accompany the Emperor to the Netherlands, but neither was this permitted to him. Returning to Italy, it was his lot to endure the slanders that from Rome had been circulated all over the country regarding his conduct and the concessions he was supposed to have made to Protestantism. He had the loftiness of spirit that rendered the failure of plans so comprehensive still more grievous and more permanently painful to him.

How noble and impressive was the position that moderate Catholicism had assumed in his person! But, having failed in securing its world-embracing design, it now became a question whether it would even maintain its own existence. Every great tendency carries with it the ineluctable task of rendering itself effective, of achieving its purpose. If it cannot achieve mastery, this implies its impending ruin.

New ecclesiastical orders

Meanwhile another direction had already developed, originally closely related to that which we have described, but ever more divergent and although intending reform, directly opposed to Protestantism. As the priesthood as heretofore existing

had been repudiated by Luther in its very concept and principle, so there arose a movement in Italy to reinstate this principle and to restore it to the respect of the Church by more rigid adherence. Both parties were sensible to the decadence of ecclesiastical institutes; but while the Germans were content with nothing less than the abolition of monasticism, the Italians sought to restore and regenerate it. While in Germany the churchman was throwing off so many of the restraints that had bound him, men were seeking in Italy to make these fetters yet more stringent. On this side of the Alps we entered on a new path; beyond them, attempts were repeated that had already been made from time to time for centuries past.

There is no period in church history not provided with examples of a decline of the ecclesiastical institutions toward worldliness, but they had always appeared to recall their origin and had returned to habits of a more blameless purity. The Carolingians already had found it necessary to enforce the rule of Chrodegang on the clergy, compelling them to community of life and to voluntary subordination. Nor did the simple rule of Benedict of Nursia long suffice in the eyes of the religious houses. During the tenth and eleventh centuries, small secluded congregations with special rules after the model of Cluny were found to be requisite. This produced an instant effect on the secular clergy; by the enforcement of celibacy, they also, as before remarked, became in a manner subjected to the forms of monastic life. In spite of the powerful religious impulse given by the crusades to all Europe – an impulse so extensively influential that even the knights and nobles submitted their profession of war to forms of monastic law – these institutions had sunk into the utmost decay when the mendicant orders arose. On their first appearance, they doubtless did much to restore things to their primitive simplicity and severity; but we have seen how they too became gradually degenerate and tainted by the world's disorders, until at length the most glaring evidence of decadence in the Church might be found among these Friars-Mendicant.

From the year 1520, a conviction had been gaining ground through all those countries into which Protestantism had not yet penetrated that renewed improvement was deeply needed by the institutes of the hierarchy. This conviction became more and more confirmed as the new tenets progressed in Germany. It found place even among the orders themselves; sometimes appearing in one order, sometimes in another.

Nothing of real value could, however, be effected by a reform of the monastic orders alone, because the secular clergy were so utterly estranged from their vocation. To mean anything, improvement must involve them too.

Here we encounter members of the Roman "Oratory of Divine Love": two of these – men, as it would seem, of contrasting character – undertook to propose such improvements. The one: Gaetano da Thiene, peaceful and retiring, of gentle manner and few words, devoted to the delights of a spiritual enthusiasm, and of whom it was said that he wished to reform the world but without letting anyone notice that he was of this world. The other: John Peter Caraffa, of whom we shall have occasion to speak at length, turbulent, impetuous, and a zealot. But Caraffa also perceived, as he said, that his heart was only more heavily oppressed the

more it followed its own desire and that it would only find peace in reliance upon God, in converse with heavenly things. Thus these two men agreed in their desire for seclusion. Convinced that reform was needed, they combined to found an institution – it has since been called the Order of Theatines – having for its purpose at once the reformation of the clergy and a life of contemplation.

They did not call themselves monks, but regular clergy – they were priests with the vows of monks. Their intention was to establish a kind of seminary. The charter of their foundation expressly allowed them to receive secular clergy. They did not originally adopt any prescribed color or form of dress, leaving these to be determined by the local customs of their inmates; they suffered even the services of the Church to be performed everywhere according to the national usages; they were thus freed from many restraints under which monks labored, expressly declaring that neither in the habits of life nor in the service of the Church should any custom be permitted to become binding on the conscience; but on the other hand, they devoted themselves rigidly to their clerical duties – to preaching, the administration of the sacraments, and the care of the sick.

The great point gained by all these efforts was this, that the useful purpose of conjoining the clerical duties and consecration of the secular clergy with the vows of monks gained extensive approval and imitation.

The effect produced by such congregations, each in its separate circle, was doubtless very considerable. But either from the exclusive end that they had proposed to themselves, as in the case of the Barnabites [Roman Catholic order founded in 1530], or from the restriction of their means, as by the very nature of their constitution was inevitable in that of the poverty-vowed Theatines, they were restrained from carrying out a deep-searching reform. They are remarkable because the voluntary character of their efforts exemplifies a great tendency that largely contributed to the regeneration of Catholicism; but the force that was to stand against the bold advance of Protestantism had to be of a totally different character. This was developing along similar lines but in a most unexpected and peculiar fashion.

Ignatius Loyola

The chivalry of Spain was the only one that had preserved a certain remnant of its religious character. The war with the Moors (but just arriving at its conclusion in the peninsula and still proceeding in Africa), the vicinity of the subjugated Moriscoes still remaining (with whom all contact continued, but fraught with religious antagonism) and the adventurous expeditions yet undertaken against infidels beyond the seas, all combined to perpetuate this spirit. In such books as the “*Amadis de Gaul*”, full of a simple, enthusiastic loyalty and bravery, that spirit was idealized.

Don Inigo Lopez de Recalde, the youngest son of the house of Loyola, was born in a castle of that name, between Azpeitia and Azcoitia, in Guipuscoa. He was of a race that belonged to the noblest in the land – “*de parientes mayores*” – and its head claimed the right of being summoned to do homage by special writ.

Educated at the court of Ferdinand the Catholic, and in the service of the Duke of Navarre, Inigo was deeply imbued with this spirit. He aspired to knightly renown, and for none of his compatriots had the glitter of arms, the fame of valor, the adventures of single combat and of love, more attraction than for him; but also the spiritual tendency was represented in him. He celebrated the first of the apostles in a romance of chivalry at this early period of his life.

It is, nevertheless, probable that his name would have become known to us only as one of those many brave and noble Spanish captains to whom the wars of Charles V gave so much opportunity for distinguishing themselves, had he not been wounded in both legs at the defense of Pamplona against the French in 1521. Twice the wounds were reopened, and such was his fortitude that the only sign of pain he permitted to escape him was the firm clenching of his hands. His sufferings were unavailing – the cure remained deplorably incomplete.

He was much versed in, and equally attached to, the romances of chivalry, more especially to the *Amadis*. During his long confinement, he also read the life of Christ, and of some of the saints.

The more his recovery was protracted and his hope of ultimate cure deferred, the more also did the spiritual reverie gain ascendancy over the worldly vision. Shall we do him wrong if we impute this result to the increased conviction that his former vigor could not be restored, that he could not hope again to shine in military service or a knightly career?

Not that the transition was so abrupt or to so opposite an extreme as it might, on the first view, appear to be. In his spiritual exercises, the origin of which has always been considered coincident with the first ecstatic meditations of his awakened spirit, he imagines two camps – one at Jerusalem, the other at Babylon; the one belonging to Christ, the other to Satan; in the one are the Good, in the other the Bad – prepared for combat.

These fanciful imaginations probably facilitated his transition from the chivalry of arms to that of religion, for it was indeed to a sort of spiritual knighthood that his aspirations now tended. The ideal perfection of religious chivalry was to consist in emulation of the achievements performed and the privations endured by the saints. Tearing himself from home and kindred, he now sought the heights of Montserrat, not driven to this by remorse for his sins, nor impelled by any reality of religious feeling, but, as he has himself declared, merely by the desire to achieve deeds as great as those which make the renown of the saints. His weapons and armor he hung up before an image of the Virgin; kneeling or standing in prayer with his pilgrim's staff in his hand, he passed the night here – holding a vigil somewhat different from that of knighthood, but expressly suggested by the *Amadis* where all the rites proper to it are minutely described. The knightly dress in which he had arrived at Montserrat he gave away, assuming the coarse garb of the hermits whose lonely dwellings are scooped among those naked rocks. After having made a general confession, he set off toward Jerusalem, not going direct to Barcelona lest he should be recognized on the highways, but making a round by Manresa, whence, after new penances, he meant to gain his port of embarkation for the holy city.

But in Manresa he was met by other trials; the direction which he had taken, not so much from conviction as caprice, began here to assume positive mastery over him. He devoted himself to the severe penances in the cell of a convent of Dominicans; he scourged himself thrice a day, rose to prayer at midnight, and passed seven hours of each day on his knees. He found these severities so difficult to endure that he greatly doubted his own ability to persevere in them for his whole life, but what was still more serious, he felt that they did not bring him peace. He had spent three days on Montserrat confessing the sins of all his past life; but not satisfied with this, he repeated it in Manresa, recalling many faults before forgotten, permitting none of the most trifling errors to escape him; but the more laborious his exploration, the more painful became the doubts that assailed him. He did not believe that he had been either accepted by or justified before God. Having read in the works of the fathers that a total abstinence from food had once moved the compassion and obtained the mercy of the Almighty, he kept rigid fast from one Sunday to another, but his confessor forbade him to continue this attempt, and Inigo, who placed the virtue of obedience above all others, thereupon desisted. Occasionally it appeared to him that his melancholy had been removed, falling away as does a heavy garment from the shoulders, but his former sufferings soon returned. His whole life seemed to him but one self-perpetuating series of sins, and he not infrequently felt tempted to throw himself from the window.

This experience cannot fail to remind us of the nearly similar sufferings endured by Luther some twenty years before, when he also was assailed by similar doubts. The great demand of religion, a perfect reconciliation with God and its full conscious assurance, could never be obtained in the ordinary manner prescribed by the Church with such certainty as to satisfy the unfathomable longings of a soul at odds with itself. But out of this labyrinth Ignatius and Luther escaped by very different paths: the latter attained to the doctrine of reconciliation through Christ without works; this it was that laid open to him the meaning of the Scriptures which then became his strong support. But of Loyola we do not find that he examined the Scriptures or became impressed by any particular dogma. Living in a world of internal emotion, and amid thoughts arising forever within him, he believed himself subjected to the influence now of the good, and now of the evil spirit. He finally arrived at the power of distinguishing the inspirations of the one from that of the other, perceiving that the soul was cheered and comforted by the first, but harassed and exhausted by the latter. And one day he seemed to have awakened from the dream and thought he had tangible evidence that all his torments were assaults of Satan. He resolved to resign all examination of his past life from that hour, to open those wounds no more, never again to touch them. This was not so much the restoration of his peace as a resolution; it was an engagement entered into by the will rather than a conviction to which the submission of the will is inevitable. It required no aid from Scripture; it was based on the belief he entertained of an immediate communion with the world of spirits. This would never have satisfied Luther. No inspirations, no visions would Luther admit. All were in his opinion alike injurious. He would have the simple, written,

indubitable word of God alone. Loyola, on the contrary, lived wholly in fantasies and inward apparitions. The person best acquainted with Christianity was, as he thought, an old woman who had told him in the worst of his mental anguish that Christ must yet appear to him. Originally this made no sense to him; but at length he believed not only to have the Savior in person before his eyes, but the Virgin Mother also. One day he stood weeping aloud on the step of the church of St. Dominick, at Manresa, because he believed himself to see the mystery of the Trinity at that moment standing before his sight. He spoke of nothing else through the whole day and was inexhaustible in similes and comparisons respecting it. Suddenly also the mystery of the creation came over him in mystic symbols. In the host he beheld the God and the man. Proceeding once along the banks of the Llobregat to a distant church, he sat down and bent his eyes earnestly on the deep stream before him, when he was suddenly raised into an ecstasy wherein the mysteries of the faith were visibly revealed to him. He believed himself to rise up a new man. Thenceforth he needed neither testimony nor Scripture. Had none such existed he would have gone without hesitation to death for the faith which he had before believed, but which he now saw with his eyes.

In the state in which he then was, without learning, profound theological knowledge, or political support, Loyola's existence must have passed and left no trace. He would have been fortunate to convert two or three Spaniards. But being enjoined by the universities of Alcala and Salamanca to study theology for four years before attempting to expound or teach the more obscure points of doctrine, he was compelled to enter on a path which gradually led him forward to an unexpected field for the exertion of his religious activity.

He proceeded to Paris, which at that time was the most celebrated university of the world.

His studies were at first surrounded by unusual difficulties; he had to begin with the class of grammar – on which he had entered in Spain – and with those of philosophy, before he could be admitted to that of theology; but his grammatical inflections and the analysis of logical forms were alike interrupted by and intermingled with the ecstasies of those religious significations with which he had been accustomed to connect them. There is something grandiose in his immediate condemnation of these as inspirations of the evil spirit, which was seeking to lure him from the path of rectitude; he subjected himself to the most rigorous discipline in the hope of combating them.

But while his studies now opened a new world to his gaze – the world of reality – he did not for a moment depart from his spiritual direction, nor fail to share them with others. It was indeed at this time that he effected those first conversions by which the future world was destined to be so powerfully and permanently influenced.

Of the two companions who shared the rooms of Loyola in the college of St. Barbara, one, Peter Faber, a Savoyard, proved an easy conquest; growing up among his father's flocks, he had one night devoted himself solemnly beneath the canopy of heaven to study and to God. He went through the course of philosophy with Ignatius (the name that Inigo took among foreigners), and the latter

communicated to him his own ascetic principles.* They lived in the closest intimacy. His second companion, Francis Xavier of Pamplona in Navarre, was by no means so easily won; his most earnest ambition was to ennoble still further the long series of his ancestors, renowned in war for five hundred years, by adding to their names his own, rendered illustrious by learning. He was handsome and rich, possessed high talent, and had already gained a footing at court. Ignatius was careful to show him all the respect to which he laid claim, and to see that others paid it also. He procured him a large audience for his first lectures, and having begun by these personal services, his influence was soon established by the natural effect of his pure example and imposing austerity of life. He at length prevailed on Xavier, as he had done on Faber, to join him in the spiritual exercises. He was by no means indulgent; three days and three nights he compelled them to fast. During the severest winters, when carriages might be seen to traverse the frozen Seine, he would not permit Faber the slightest relaxation of discipline. He finished by making these two young men entirely his own, and shared with them his most intimate thoughts and feelings. Let us examine the more important features in the development of this association. After having won over certain other Spaniards to whom Ignatius had rendered himself indispensable either by good counsels or other aid, such as Salmeron, Lainez, and Bobodilla, they proceeded one day to the church of Montmartre. Faber, who was already in orders, read the mass. They took the vow of chastity and swore to proceed to Jerusalem, after the completion of their studies, there to live in poverty and dedicate their days to the conversion of the Saracens. Or, should they find it impossible to reach that place or to remain there, they were next to offer their services to the Pope, agreeing to go whithersoever he might assign them their labors, without condition and without reward. Having taken this oath, each received the host, which Faber also took himself. This completed, they proceeded in company to a repast at the fountain of St. Denis.

Here we see a league formed between enthusiastic young men, of which the purposes were absolutely unattainable but still in accordance with the original ideas of Ignatius, or departing from them only so far as, on a calculation of probabilities, they might find themselves unable to carry them into effect.

In the beginning of the year 1537, we find them assembled in Venice, with three other companions, prepared for the commencement of their pilgrimage. We have already observed many changes in Loyola: from a military knighthood, we have seen him pass to a religious chivalry; we have marked his subjection to the most violent mental conflicts, and we have seen him force his way through them by the aid of a visionary asceticism; he became a theologian and the founder of a mystical society, and now at length his purposes assumed their final and permanent character. His departure for Jerusalem was first deferred by the war just then commencing between Venice and the Turks, and the prospect of his intended pilgrimage was rendered more remote; but the institution of the Theatines, with which he became acquainted in Venice, may be said to have first opened his eyes to his true vocation. For some time Ignatius lived in the closest intimacy with Caraffa, taking up his abode in the convent of Theatines which had been

established in Venice. He served in the hospitals which Caraffa superintended, and wherein he exercised his novices. But not entirely content with the institution of the Theatines, he proposed to Caraffa certain changes in its mode of action, and this is said to have caused the dissolution of their intimacy. But even this fact makes it obvious how deep an impression had been produced on him by that society; he there saw an order of priests devoting themselves zealously and strictly to their true clerical duties. Should he, as seemed ever more probable, have to remain on this side of the Mediterranean and find the scene of his activity in Western Christendom, he perceived clearly that this must be his course also – that there was no other alternative.

In pursuit of this conviction, he took priest's orders in Venice with all his companions; and after a fortnight of days of prayer, he began to preach in Vicenza together with three others of his society. On the same day and at the same hour, they appeared in different streets, mounted stones, waved their hats, and with loud cries exhorted the people to repentance. Preachers of a very unwonted aspect – their clothing in rags, their looks emaciated, and their language a mixture of Spanish and Italian well-nigh unintelligible.

Having determined to make the journey to Rome by different roads, they were now about to separate; but first they established certain rules by means of which they might observe a fixed uniformity of life, even when apart: next came the question what reply should be made to those who might inquire their profession. They pleased themselves with the thought of making war as soldiers against Satan, and in accordance with the old military fantasies of Loyola, they assumed the name of the Company of Jesus, exactly as a company of soldiers takes the name of its captain.

Their situation in Rome was in the first instance by no means free from difficulty. Ignatius thought he saw every door closed against them, and they had once more to defend themselves from suspicions of heresy. But soon the mode of their lives, with their zeal in preaching, instructing youth, and tending the sick, attracted numerous adherents, and so many showed a disposition to join them that they felt themselves in a condition to prepare for a formal institution of their society.

They had already taken two vows; they now assumed the third, that of obedience. But as this had always been held by Loyola to be the first of virtues, so they desired to surpass all other orders in that particular. It was already going very far to elect, as they resolved to do, their general for life; but even this did not satisfy their enthusiasm – they added the special obligation “to perform whatsoever the reigning pontiff should command them, to go forth into all lands, among Turks, heathens, or heretics, wherever he might please to send them, without hesitation or delay, as without question, condition, or reward”.

How entirely is all this in contrast to the tendencies hitherto manifested by that period! While from every other side the Pope met only opposition or defection and had only continued desertions to expect, here was a body of men, earnest, enthusiastic, and zealous, uniting to devote themselves exclusively to his service; there could be no hesitation in such a case for the pontiff. In the year 1540, he

gave his sanction to their institute, at first with certain restrictions, but afterward, in 1543, unconditionally.

And now its members also made their final arrangements. Six of the oldest associates met to choose their president, who, according to the first sketch of their plan presented to the Pope, "should dispense offices and grades at his own pleasure, should form the rules of their constitution with the advice and aid of the members, but should alone have the power of commanding in every instance, and should be honored by all as though Christ himself were present in his person". The choice fell unanimously on Ignatius, "to whom," as Salmeron expressed it on his ballot, "they were all indebted for their birth in Christ and for the milk of his word".

At length, then, the Society of Jesus had acquired its form. This association also was a company of regular clergy; its duties were likewise a combination of the clerical and monastic, but the members were nevertheless broadly distinguished from those of other congregations.

The Theatines had freed themselves from many of the less important obligations of conventional life, but the Jesuits went much further; they dispensed entirely with the monastic habit and exempted themselves from all those devotional exercises in common, by which so much time is occupied in convents. Exempted from these less important practices, they devoted all their energies and every hour of their lives to the essential duties of their office; not to one only, as did the Barnabites – although they attended sedulously to the sick as one measure toward acquiring a good name – nor with the restrictions that fettered the Theatines, but to all the greater duties equally, and with whatever force they could command; to preaching, to confession, to the education of youth. They laid aside, in short, all secondary matters, devoting themselves wholly to such labors as were essential, of immediate result, and calculated for the extension of their influence.

Thus was a pre-eminently practical direction evolved from the visionary aspirations of Ignatius; and from the ascetic conversions he had made, there resulted an institution framed with all that skillful adaptation of means to their end which the most consummate worldly prudence could suggest.

His most sanguine hopes were now more than fulfilled – he held the uncontrolled direction of a society, among whose members his own peculiar views found cordial acceptance, and wherein the religious convictions at which he had arrived by accident or the force of his genius were made the object of profound study and the venerated basis and guide of belief. The care of souls, which he had so earnestly recommended, was entered on with a zeal that he could not have hoped for, and to an extent surpassing his highest anticipations. And lastly, he was himself the object of an implicit obedience, combining that of the soldier to his captain with that of the priest to his spiritual chief.

But before we further describe the effect which the Company of Jesus soon achieved, let us investigate one of the most important causes contributing to its successful progress.

First sittings of the Council of Trent

We have already observed the interests by which the Emperor was moved to demand a council, together with those inclining the Pope to avoid and refuse it. There was, however, one aspect under which an assembly of the Church might be considered desirable even by the pontiff – that the doctrines of the Catholic Church might be inculcated with unwavering zeal and successfully extended, it was essential to remove the doubts existing in the bosom of the Church herself, doubts which touched more than one of her tenets. The authority to do this effectively was exclusively vested in a council. An important consideration for the Pope, therefore, was the choice of a time when it might be held in favorable circumstances and under his own influence.

The eventful moment in which the two religious parties had become more nearly approximate than at any other period, on the ground of a moderate opinion, was also decisive in this question. We have remarked that the Pope believed he saw symptoms of an intention on the part of the Emperor himself to call a council. At this moment, then, assured from all sides of adherence from the Catholic princes, he lost no time in anticipating the imperial purpose. The movements we have before described were still proceeding when the pontiff resolved to interpose no further delay, but at once take steps for the ecumenic assembling of the Church. He made known his intention at first to Contarini, and through him to the Emperor. The negotiations proceeded with earnest purpose; the Pope's letters of convocation were issued, and in the following year we find his legates already in Trent. They arrived on November 22, 1542.

Again, however, new obstacles presented themselves – the number of bishops who appeared was not sufficient. The times were too deeply involved in wars, nor were the circumstances altogether favorable. It was not until December 1545 that the opening of the Council actually took place. At last the old prevaricator had found the right moment.

For what moment could have been more propitious than that when the Emperor, feeling himself threatened by the advance of Protestantism both in his own reputation and in the established government of his inherited possessions, had resolved to meet them with armed might? Since he would require the aid of the Pope, he could not venture now to assert those claims which he was believed to intend bringing forward in a council. The war would keep him entirely occupied. The power of the Protestants made it impossible to foresee the extent of the embarrassments in which he might become involved, and he would thus be in no condition to press too earnestly for those reforms with which he had so long been threatening the papal throne. The Pope had, besides, another method of baffling his purposes: the Emperor demanded that the Council should begin with the subject of reform, but the papal legates carried a resolution that the question of reform and the questions of the Church should be treated together. In effect, however, the discussion of the dogmas was that first entered on.

Again, the Pope not only succeeded in averting whatever might have been injurious to his interests, but contrived to secure all that could be turned to his

advantage. The establishment of the disputed doctrines was of the very first importance to him, as we have shown. It was now to be decided whether any of those opinions tending toward the creed of the Protestants could hold a place within the limits of the Catholic faith.

However closely these opinions may appear to approximate one another, they are in fact diametrically opposed. The Lutheran doctrine does indeed assert the necessity of inner regeneration, points out the way to salvation, and declares that good works must follow, but it also maintains that divine grace proceeds from the merits of Christ alone. The Council of Trent, on the contrary, admitted the merits of Christ, it is true, but attributed justification to these merits only so far as they promote regeneration, and thereby good works, on which, as a final result, this Council makes all depend.

And thus were the Protestant opinions altogether excluded from Catholicism; all mediation was utterly rejected. This occurred precisely at the moment when the Emperor was victorious in Germany, the Lutherans were submitting in almost every direction, and preparations were advancing to subdue those who still hoped to hold out.

The Inquisition

In the meantime, measures had been adopted for the dissemination of the doctrines promulgated at Trent and for the suppression of those which were contrary. The old Dominican Inquisition had long fallen into decay. The choice of inquisitors was committed to the monastic orders, and it sometimes happened that these men shared the very opinions that they were appointed to suppress. In Spain, one had already departed from the original forms by appointing a supreme tribunal of the Inquisition for that country. Caraffa and Burgos were both old Dominicans, zealots for the purity of Catholicism, holding stern views of moral rectitude, in their own lives rigidly austere, and immovable in their opinions. These men advised the Pope to establish a supreme tribunal of Inquisition in Rome, universal in its jurisdiction, and on which all others should depend. "As St. Peter," exclaimed Caraffa, "subdued the first heresiarchs in no other place than Rome, so must the successors of Peter destroy all the heresies of the whole world in Rome." The Jesuits account it among the glories of their order that their founder, Loyola, supported this proposition by a special memorial. The bull was published on the twenty-first of July 1542.

It will be remarked that everything tends toward severity – inflexible, remorseless severity – until confession has been wrung out no mercy may be hoped for. A fearful state of things; and more especially so when opinions were not well fixed or fully developed, and many were seeking to reconcile the more profound doctrines of Christianity with the institutions of the existing Church. The weaker resigned themselves and submitted; those of firmer character, on the contrary, now attached themselves all the more to the proscribed opinions and sought to withdraw from the violence threatening them.

Disturbances had taken place before in Modena; they now reappeared, many being denounced to the Inquisition. Filippo Valentini withdrew to Trent, and

Castelvetro thought it advisable, at least for a time, to secure himself by a retreat into Germany.

Persecution and dismay were now proceeding throughout all Italy, and the rancor of contending factions came to the aid of the inquisitors. How often did he who had long waited in vain for an opportunity to destroy his enemy now compass his designs by an accusation of heresy! Now the old bigoted monks again had the weapons wherewith to combat that band of cultivated men whose literary labors had led them toward religious speculations, and whose intelligent reasonings had made them an object of hatred to the monks, who were in their turn despised and disliked by the literati.

In this manner all the agitations of dissident opinion were subdued by force and annihilated throughout Italy. Almost the whole order of the Franciscans was compelled to recantation, and the disciples of Valdez had for the most part to retract their opinions. In Venice a certain degree of freedom was allowed to the foreigners, principally Germans, who resided there for purposes of trade or study; but the natives, on the contrary, were compelled to abjuration, and their meetings were broken up. Many took to flight, and these fugitives were to be found in every town of Germany and Switzerland. Those who would not abjure their faith and could not escape were subjected to the penalty. In Venice, they were taken beyond the lagoons by two boats. Arriving in the open sea, a plank was laid between the boats, on which the condemned was placed. The rowers pulled simultaneously in opposite directions; the plank fell: once more did the unhappy victim invoke the name of Christ, and then the waves closed over him; he sank to rise no more. In Rome, the auto-da-fe was held formally at certain intervals before the Church of Santa Maria alla Minerva. Many sought to escape by flying from place to place with their wives and children; we trace their wanderings for a time, then they disappear; they had most probably fallen into the toils of their merciless hunters. Others remained where they were. The Duchess of Ferrara, who, but for the Salic law, would have sat on the French throne, was not protected by her birth and high rank. Her husband was himself her accuser. "She sees no one," says Marot, "the mountains rise between herself and her friends; she mingles her wine with her tears."

Further progress of the Jesuit institution

In this course of affairs, when the opponents had been removed by force, the dogmas had been redefined in keeping with the spirit of the century, and the ecclesiastical might supervised their observation with unavoidable weapons, the order of Jesuits arose in the closest union with this might.

Not only in Rome, but throughout all Italy, the most extraordinary success attended its efforts. Designed originally for the common people, it first gained acceptance from the higher classes.

This rapid success was, of necessity, most powerfully influential in the development of the institution. The new arrangements were perfectly well calculated in themselves and, at the same time, laid the foundations of a hierarchy,

eminently proper by its several gradations, to subjugate the minds of those on whom it acted.

And now, if we examine the laws of which the code of the Jesuits came gradually to be formed, we shall perceive that an entire separation of its members from all their accustomed relationships was one of its prime considerations. Love of kindred they denounced as a carnal inclination. The man who resigned his property to enter the order was in no case to bestow it on his relations, but must distribute all to the poor. He who had once become a Jesuit could neither receive nor write a letter that was not read by his superior. The society demands the whole being; all the faculties and inclinations of the man must be held in its fetters.

It claims to share in the most intimate of his secrets; all his faults and even all his virtues must be carefully enumerated. A confessor is appointed him by his superiors, who reserve the right of granting absolution in any cases as may be deemed expedient that they should know of. They insist on this regulation as a means to their obtaining a perfect knowledge of subordinates, so that they might the better employ them at their pleasure.

For in the order of Jesuits obedience takes the place of every motive or affection that usually awakens men to activity – obedience, absolute and unconditional, without one thought or question as to its object or consequences. No man shall aspire to any rank above that which he holds. The secular coadjutor may not even learn to read or write without permission, if he does not possess these attainments. With the most unlimited abjuration of all right of judgment, in total and blind subjection to the will of his superiors, must he resign himself to be led, like a thing without life, as the staff, for example, that the superior holds in his hand, to be turned to any purpose seeming good to him. The society is to him as the representative of the divine providence.

What a power was that now committed to the general – vested in him for life was the faculty of wielding this unquestioning obedience; nor is there one to whom he is responsible for the use made of it. According to the constitution of the order submitted to the pontiff in 1543, every member of the society who might chance to be at the same place with the general was to be called to the discussion of even the most trifling affairs. But a version which was confirmed in 1550 by Julius III freed him from this restriction except when he might himself desire it. For some material change in the constitution, or for the suppression of houses and colleges alone, was a consultation mandatory; in every other case, all power is committed to him to act as may be most conducive to the good of the society. He has assistants in the different provinces, but these confine themselves strictly to such matters as he shall refer to them. All presidents of provinces, colleges, and houses, he names at his pleasure: he receives or dismisses, dispenses or furnishes, and may be said to exercise a sort of papal authority on a small scale.

Other institutes have existed, forming a world within the world, and which, releasing their members from all exterior obligations, have sought to absorb their whole being to themselves and to inspire each individual with a new principle of life and action. This was pre-eminently the purpose of the Jesuits, and it was fully accomplished. Peculiar to the Jesuits is the fact that on the one hand they not only

support but demand individual development, on the other hand they hold this development in bounds and turn it to their service. Hence all relationships are characterized by personality, subordination, mutual surveillance. But a firmly compacted and perfect unity was thus formed – a body endowed with nerve and vigorous power of action. For such reasons men made monarchical powers so supreme: one subordinates oneself entirely, unless the possessor himself departs from its principle. It was perfectly consistent with the idea of the society to permit none of its members the acceptance of ecclesiastical dignities; for these might have involved the fulfillment of duties, or the forming of relations, over which the society could no longer exercise control. In the earlier days of Jesuitism this rule was most strictly observed.

Thus the society, regarding its members as its own exclusive property, was desirous of seeing them attain to the highest culture of their energies – physical and mental – but ever in accordance with its principle.

This careful development of the individual was, in fact, indispensable to the performance of the duties the society undertook – those of the pulpit, that is, of the school, and of the confessional. To the two latter in particular the Jesuits devoted themselves in a distinctive fashion.

It has been said that the Jesuits profited by the experience of the Protestants, and in some few particulars this may have happened; but on the whole they present a very strong contrast to each other. Ignatius has opposed to the discursive, logical, and very close method of the Protestants (a method by its very nature polemical), one of his own which is entirely different, being short, intuitive, calculated for awakening the imaginative faculties and prompting to instant resolve.

And in this manner did those visionary elements that had characterized his commencement condense themselves at length into an extraordinary force of practical influence. Never wholly freed from the military habits of his early days, Loyola formed his society into a sort of religious standing army, selected carefully man by man, each one trained for the special service he was intended to perform, and commanded by himself: such were the cohorts that he dedicated to the service of the Pope. He lived to see them spread over the greater portion of the earth's surface.

At the time of his death in 1556, the company of Ignatius numbered thirteen provinces, exclusive of the Roman. A mere glance will serve to show where the strength of the order lay; the majority of these provinces, seven, namely, belonged to the western peninsula and its colonies. In Castile there were ten colleges. Aragon and Andalusia had each five. Portugal had gone beyond even this; houses were established there both for professed members and novices. Over the colonies of Portugal the Company of Jesus exercised almost absolute mastery. Twenty-eight members of the order were occupied in Brazil, while in East India, from Goa to Japan, not less than a hundred were employed. An attempt on Ethiopia was also made from this quarter, and a Provincial was sent there, the success of the enterprise not being doubted. All these provinces of Spanish and Portuguese languages and manners were directed by one commissary general, Francesco Borgia. The nation that had given birth to the founder, was also that where his

influence was most immediately and firmly established. But the effect produced in Italy was very little inferior. There were three provinces of the Italian tongue. First, the Roman, under the immediate direction of the general; this included Naples. It was furnished with houses for novices and professed and with two colleges in the city, namely the "Collegium Romanum" and the "Collegium Germanicum". The last was erected for Germans only by the advice of Cardinal Morone, but not with any great effect as yet. Second, the Sicilian, containing four colleges completed and two begun. The first Jesuits had been introduced into Sicily by the viceroy della Vega. Messina and Palermo had vied with each other in establishing colleges, and from these it was that the others afterward arose. The third truly Italian province encompassed all the north of Italy, and contained ten colleges. The order was not equally successful in other countries, where it was either opposed by Protestantism or by a strong tendency to Protestant opinion. In France they had but one college actually in operation; and though two provinces were counted in Germany, both were as yet in their infancy. The first was to comprise Vienna, Prague, and Ingolstadt, but its condition was extremely precarious. The second was intended to include the Netherlands, but Philip II had not yet assured a legal existence to the Jesuits in that part of his dominions.

This great and rapid success was a guarantee of the power to be attained by the order. The position it had secured in those truly Catholic countries, the two peninsulas, was a circumstance of the utmost importance.

Conclusion

Thus we perceive that while the tenets of Protestantism were enlarging their influence over the minds of men on the one hand, a new impulse had on the other been received by Catholicism and was acting vigorously in Rome, and more especially on the court of its pontiff. This new impulse, equally with its opponent, had taken rise from the spirit of worldliness pervading the Church, or rather from the necessity of a change that this corrupt spirit had forced on the general perception.

These impulses had at first displayed a tendency toward approximation. There was a certain period during which Germany had not entirely resolved to cast off the hierarchy. There was also a moment when Italy seemed to be approaching a rational modification of that hierarchy. That moment passed.

The Protestants, guided by Scripture, retraced their steps with ever increasing firmness toward the primitive forms of Christian faith and life. The Catholics, on the contrary, stood by the ecclesiastical institutions as these had been consolidated in the course of a century, and determined only on renovating all, and infusing increased energy, a more rigid severity, and deeper earnestness of purpose into each. On the one hand there rose up Calvinism, its spirit far more anti-Catholic than that of Lutheranism; on the other, whatever could but recall the idea of the Protestant doctrines was confronted by unflinching opposition and repelled with determined hostility.

In like fashion two neighboring and kindred springs arise on the summit of the mountain, but each seeks its path to the valleys in an opposite direction, and their waters are separated forever.

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Leopold von Ranke, who was born in 1795, is considered to be one of the founders of the modern practice of writing history. This collection of his writings, edited and introduced by Georg G. Iggers, was first published in 1973 and remains the leading collection of Ranke's writings in the English language.

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Georg G. Iggers is Distinguished Professor of History Emeritus at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He has published numerous influential works on historiography including his co-authored *Global History of Historiography* (2008) and *Twentieth Century Historiography* (2005). He has received many fellowships including the Guggenheim, the Rockefeller, the Newberry Library and the National Endowment for the Humanities. He was also formerly a Fulbright fellow and a Woodrow Wilson Center fellow and recipient of Alexander von Humboldt Research Prize. From 1995 to 2000 he was president of the International Commission for the History and Theory of Historiography.

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